

**“Should I stay or should I go?” –  
The pushes and pulls around the OE in New Zealand**

---

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Master of Arts in Sociology

**Anika Haverig**

---

University of Canterbury  
2007

The OE is a working holiday phenomenon in New Zealand that shapes the life experiences of many young adults. “Should I stay or should I go?” critically engages with this social phenomenon by approaching it as simultaneously an opportunity for freedom and choice and a field of rules, regulations, and constraints. The analysis of the OE offered in this thesis draws on Foucauldian understandings of power and discourse and, more particularly, Nikolas Rose’s approach to governance through freedom and the constitution of subjects in advanced liberal democracies. By using these theoretical resources, it investigates how the OE is discursively constructed as a life course experience through which power operates via the promises of freedom and choice.

A combination of substantive resources, including existing academic literature, print and virtual media, questionnaires, web-based discussions, and conversations with young New Zealanders planning to pursue an OE are used to illustrate how many of them are governed as they embrace the freedoms associated with the OE. The use of Foucault facilitates an understanding of the discourses through which young New Zealanders are constituted and constitute themselves as OE travellers. Attention is also paid to the ways in which the actions of authorities – governments, non-state organisations, and commercial travel operators – contribute to the regulatory environments and social imaginaries that shape young adults’ experiences of the OE.

## Acknowledgements

---

I would like to express my appreciation to my supervisors Rosemary DuPlessis and Ruth McManus who have supported me enormously in the completion of this thesis. My sincere thanks to both of you for your generous assistance, helpful advice, and feedback throughout the year. Thank you for encouraging me to think in new directions.

Many thanks to all my family and friends both in Germany and New Zealand who have supported me in various ways. Particular thanks to Laura, Aline, Al, and all the others from the grad lab for your encouragement and for the much needed coffee breaks. Thanks are also due to Aaron, whose support and constant encouragement has sustained me throughout the year.

I must also acknowledge all participants of this study for organising their time and contributing to conversations, online discussions, and questionnaires. Through this, they provided information that was crucial for this thesis.

## Contents

---

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements .....	ii
Table of figures.....	vi
 <b>CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF THESIS .....</b>	<b>1</b>
O and E .....	1
Contextualising the New Zealand OE .....	2
The Grand Tour – a historical OE .....	2
OE vs. Gap year.....	4
The OE in New Zealand – the contemporary context .....	6
A new focus for research on the OE.....	9
Theoretical framework .....	10
Methodology.....	11
Thesis structure.....	13
 <b>CHAPTER TWO: FREEDOM, CONSTRAINT, AND THE OE .....</b>	<b>16</b>
Introduction .....	16
Developing a theoretical framework .....	16
Power/ Discourse.....	18
The constitution of subject positions .....	22
Governance through freedom .....	23
The normalising discourse.....	26
The project of the self.....	27
The OE as a form of governance through freedom .....	29
Conclusion.....	30
 <b>CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS .....</b>	<b>32</b>
Introduction .....	32
Methodology.....	33

Representing the OE – published texts, websites, and advertisements .....	34
Fieldwork – young adults’ narratives about themselves .....	38
Semi structured interviews .....	39
The questionnaire .....	44
The blog: web-based discussions .....	45
Positioning of researcher – the outsider .....	48
Methodological limitations.....	50
Conclusion.....	51
 <b>CHAPTER FOUR: FIELDS OF POSSIBILITIES .....</b>	<b>53</b>
Introduction .....	53
Authorities relevant to OE discourses .....	54
Ruling institutions and their political aims.....	55
<i>Over the ditch – living and working in Australia</i> .....	58
<i>Working holiday agreements</i> .....	62
<i>Exploring the motherland – an OE in the UK</i> .....	68
Independent Authorities .....	72
<i>The tourism industry &amp; OE packages</i> .....	73
<i>New Zealand education institutions</i> .....	79
<i>The Royal New Zealand Returned and Services’ Association</i> .....	82
Alignment among various authorities.....	85
 <b>CHAPTER FIVE: CONDITIONS OF POSSIBLE ACTIONS.....</b>	<b>87</b>
Introduction .....	87
The OE - finite freedoms .....	87
Time out.....	90
Conceptions of New Zealand and elsewhere.....	93
<i>Australia – a peculiar elsewhere</i> .....	95
<i>Living elsewhere makes home better</i> .....	96
Preparing to leave temporarily .....	98
Anticipating freedom.....	101
The imaginary of the OE .....	102
Free as regulated.....	105
Freedom of the twenties and responsibilities of the thirties .....	108
Conclusion.....	111

## **CHAPTER SIX: SUBJECT POSITIONS AND CAPACITIES ..... 113**

Introduction .....	113
Capacities to do an OE .....	113
Participating in OE discourses.....	115
Shaping capacities – Encouragement and opposition .....	119
The desired subjectivity.....	126
Views of non-OE travellers .....	127
Constructing a freely choosing subjectivity .....	130
Out of your comfort zone .....	132
Conclusion .....	134

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION ..... 136**

Introduction .....	136
Key findings .....	137
Fields of possibilities associated with the OE .....	139
OE – finitude and freedom .....	142
Capacities to do an OE and subject positions.....	144
Assessing the contribution of this research .....	147
Concluding remarks.....	149

## **REFERENCES..... 151**

Appendix A: Interview information sheet .....	160
Appendix B: Questionnaire information sheet .....	161
Appendix C: Interview consent form .....	162
Appendix D: Information provided on the blog .....	163
Appendix E: List of participants.....	164
Appendix F: Advertisement for interview participants .....	165
Appendix G: The pamphlet .....	166
Appendix H: Schedule of interview questions .....	167
Appendix I: The questionnaire .....	171
Appendix J: OE information e-mailed to Lincoln students .....	175

## Table of figures

---

Figure 1: Statements from the blog .....	46
Figure 2: Comments made on the blog.....	47
Figure 3: Age of permanent and long-term migrants to/from Australia in 2005 .....	60
Figure 4: Age of permanent and long-term migrants to/from all countries.....	63
Figure 5: New Zealand's working holiday agreements.....	64
Figure 6: Length of absence of travellers to the UK .....	68
Figure 7: Age of permanent and long-term migrants to/from the UK .....	69
Figure 8: IEP advertisement image .....	74
Figure 9: STA campaign ' <i>Define your own OE</i> ' .....	76
Figure 10: STA advertisement 1.....	76
Figure 11: STA advertisement 2.....	77
Figure 12: STA advertisement 3.....	77
Figure 13: University of Auckland Exchange Programme .....	79
Figure 14: RSA ANZAC Remembrance campaign .....	83

*They come from the most beautiful country in the world, but it is a small country and very remote. After a while this isolation oppresses them and they go abroad. They roam the world looking not for adventure but for satisfaction. They run service cars in Iraq, goldmines in Nevada, or newspapers in Fleet Street. They are a queer, lost, eccentric, pervading people who will seldom admit to the deep desire that is in all of them to go home and live quietly in New Zealand again.*

(John Mulgan 1984)

*Whatever it is that feeds our obsession with travel – a search for identity, a longing for adventure, simple curiosity, a desperate desire to escape these narrow islands, or some combination of all these things – the recipe has made us passionate travellers.*

(Tina Shaw 1998)

*More than 30 years ago, I discovered Europe by hitchhiking around it each summer, sleeping on beaches and in cheap hostels, breezing into Barcelona on the back of a motorbike, watching kids in Nimes cover the table with the ingredients of a fresh ratatouille, selling my blood in a clinic off Omonia Square in Athens for \$8 – enough for a few more days on the islands. I learned more from these trips than from years in school...*

(Michael Elliott 2002)



## Chapter One: Overview of thesis

---

### O and E

OE – everyone in New Zealand seems to know what these letters stand for and ‘there is probably no other country in which they resonate as strongly as they do in New Zealand’ (Sell 2004: 10). In contemporary New Zealand, the acronym OE is used to describe the Overseas Experience – young adults’ time overseas travelling and working in other countries. Going away for a conventional OE normally entails an extended period of residence in another country, typically in the UK. Many young adults use this time away to explore other countries and get to know various cultures. While travel is an explicit part of an OE, for most, a significant proportion of their time away is spent working – usually to pay for their travel experiences.

The OE is a working holiday phenomenon that does not involve permanent emigration, but the intention to return to New Zealand. Leaving to travel and work elsewhere is only different to emigration if those who leave intend to come back – at least at the time when their OE begins. While the intention to return is important, the length of time of an OE is not specified and the period of people’s absence from New Zealand varies. Some only go away for an extended holiday, many travel for a few years, while others start an OE and then eventually settle permanently elsewhere. This means that the OE can be described as a phenomenon somewhere between a holiday and emigration – too long to be a holiday, too short to be considered as emigration (Wilson as cited by Jemmet 2005).

In a broader sense, the OE is not only about young New Zealanders travelling to explore other countries, but about personal transformation. The OE is not only represented as a ‘national ritual’ (Sell 2004: 16) or an ‘iconic Kiwi activity’, but also as ‘a symbol of adulthood’ (Inkson & Myers 2003: 171) and, more specifically, a ‘rite of passage’ (Inkson et al 1999: 52) into adulthood. In these respects, the OE is often represented as a positive self-development experience, an excellent opportunity to expand horizons, acquire skills, and achieve adult status (Myers & Inkson 2003). This

suggests that in the public imagination, living and working overseas is understood as a coming of age experience. Yet, what sort of changes do young New Zealanders envisage as they embark on their working holiday overseas? And is the OE the freely chosen course of action it appears to be? These questions are central to my approach to the OE and have significantly shaped my research agendas.

I am interested in the opportunities for freedom the OE provides for young New Zealanders. I also have an interest in power and how it works in the world. In this thesis, I combine these interests in an analysis of the New Zealand OE that explores the forms of power operating through it. This approach raises significant questions: How does the OE offer opportunities for action and choice, but also involve regulations and constraints? How is it simultaneously a site for freedom, self exploration, or personal development and a site for governing citizens? I aim to analyse the OE not just in terms of personal agency and freedom, but as what Foucault (1978: 11) would call a ‘regime of power’. These aims shape the theoretical and methodological frameworks employed to conduct this inquiry into the New Zealand OE.

## **Contextualising the New Zealand OE**

Existing literature on travel activities similar to the OE such as the historical Grand Tour or the British gap year suggest that this New Zealand young adult travel phenomenon can be placed in a wider context. Through contextualising the OE historically and comparatively, I aim to identify both differences and similarities to other phenomena and, moreover, to illustrate how motivations for long-term overseas travel are collectively defined while experienced as subjective and individual.

### **The Grand Tour – a historical OE**

The idea that travelling is a way to learn about the world and broaden horizons is not exclusively a contemporary occurrence. Instead, the OE can be considered as a current equivalent of a class specific travel phenomenon that developed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, called the Grand Tour, a European travel paradigm that flourished from about

1660 until the development of mass transit in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Buzard 2002, Fussell 1987). The backdrop to the Grand Tour was the rise in a particular view of knowledge as rooted in experience – which significantly changed the meaning of travel. As a result, it became an expected experience for elite men who wanted to further their knowledge.<sup>1</sup> Consistent with the Tour's character as a learning experience, a particularly important destination for this journey was continental Europe, as it was assumed to serve as a good source of experiences, knowledge, and access to high culture (Buzard 2002).

Urry (2002: 4) argues that by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Grand Tour 'had become firmly established (...) for the sons of the aristocracy and the gentry'. As a learning exercise and linked to the idea that those who govern should be knowledgeable, the Tour played a key role in completing the education of the English upper class. 'Usually occurring just after completion of studies at Oxford or Cambridge University and running anywhere from one to five years in length, the Tour was a social ritual intended to prepare these young men to assume the leadership positions preordained for them at home' (Buzard 2002:38). From this perspective, the Grand Tour is also a historical rite of passage associated with assuming positions of authority based within an aristocratic system of rule.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the range of people travelling on a Grand Tour widened to include the sons of the professional middle class (Urry 2002), which was closely related to a shift away from the academic and scholarly components of the Tour. According to Urry (2002: 4), the Tour's character shifted from the former classical Grand Tour to a romantic Grand Tour of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, 'which saw the emergence of 'scenic tourism' and a much more private and passionate experience of beauty and the sublime'. The emergence of mass rail transit in the 1820s popularised leisure travel and led to an expansion of the tourist infrastructure, which made travel available to more people. Due to this development, the Tour itself lost its status as a marker of distinction.

---

<sup>1</sup> Buzard (2002) suggests that undertaking this itinerary was particularly fashionable for wealthy people from England, as not everyone could afford to travel in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The similarity between the Grand Tour and the New Zealand OE consists in the idea of travelling as a way for young adults to widen the range of their experiences, to complete their education, and ultimately, to develop a particular sense of self relevant to their future adult lives. The notion of both the Grand Tour and the OE as a rite of passage to adulthood reinforces this parallel. The origins of this form of long-term travel facilitate an understanding of the importance of contemporary overseas travel for young New Zealanders as a way to extend their capacities.

The OE as a current travel activity is not unique to New Zealand; similar phenomena can be observed in other, predominantly Anglophone countries, such as Australia, South Africa, and the UK. In what follows, I focus on the British gap year, another contemporary equivalent of the historical Grand Tour.

### **OE vs. Gap year**

The gap year is in some respects the British counterpart of the New Zealand OE. The term refers to a prolonged period that some British students spend abroad, combining work and travel experiences in other countries. As this is a relatively new research topic, there are no precise statistics on how many young Britons take gap years. However, existing research in this field suggests that it is becoming increasingly common (Jones 2004, Simpson 2005), as the number of those taking a gap year has risen by about 30% since 2000 (Manzoor 2004).<sup>2</sup> Existing literature also suggests that the majority of those taking a gap year are – still – from white middle class backgrounds (Jones 2004, Duncan as cited by Shepherd 2007).<sup>3</sup>

The gap year is similar to the OE, as it also represents a break from formal education or employment and, moreover, is referred to as a ‘rite of passage’ (Frean 2006) into adulthood in the British context. However, the two phenomena are also different. Gap years are predominantly pursued after completing schooling, while the New Zealand

---

<sup>2</sup> Due to the rise in young people taking a gap year, Manzoor (2004) argues that it has ‘evolved from being the preserve of a few freethinkers to a generally accepted rite of passage’.

<sup>3</sup> While a working-class gap year has emerged, Jones (2004) suggests that there is, however, a growing division between what young adults from these different backgrounds are doing while away. There are, therefore, different types of gap years.

OE can occur at this time, but also at other times in early adulthood. Other differences derive from the primary goal of the gap year and its association with voluntary work.

The gap year is closely associated with an almost compulsory element of voluntary work. It is not only seen as a chance to broaden horizons and learn about other countries, but also to make a positive contribution to the world. Simpson (2005: 447) states that the term gap year originally referred to a more radical activity of ‘dropping out’ of employment or further education. She indicates that as such, it was mainly ‘dominated by charity and inspired by the travel of the hippie generation’ (Simpson 2005: 447). Even though the focus for some Briton is now on the travel experience, spending time abroad doing voluntary work is still a dominant idea of the gap year, and many young adults travel to developing nations to volunteer their labour for development projects.

Simpson (2005) identifies changes with respect to the gap year and its initial ideas as the professionalisation of youth travel. According to Simpson (2005: pp. 447 – 450), the potential economic value of youth travel has been recognised and as a result, an institutionally accepted gap year industry has evolved that offers commercialised programmes open for mass participation. Instead of charity, the gap year is now associated with the achievement of personal transformation and ‘a set of marketable values that can be accepted by institutions, desired by parents, and bought by young people’ (Simpson 2005: 450). This development encourages international volunteer tourism, which is not only highly valued, but also criticised in its potential links to colonialism (Frean 2006). The colonial attitude associated with the gap year arises out of a focus on the person doing the volunteer work rather than the outcome for the development projects in which they are involved. Manzoor (2004) and Simpson (2005) suggest that gap years, in particular those that include voluntary work, are, in part, planned to impress future employers and enhance one’s CV. While this may also be relevant to some young New Zealanders, the main focus of the OE, however, seems to be on personal development, paid work, and the flexibility and freedom that is achieved by going away.

This brief discussion of the Grand Tour and gap year sets the New Zealand OE in a wider context and helps to clarify some of its features. The OE, like the Grand Tour

and the gap year, is linked to notions of personal development through travel experiences and is associated with the transition from youth to adulthood. To understand the meanings and practices associated with the OE, it is now important to investigate its contemporary context in more detail.

## **The OE in New Zealand – the contemporary context**

Superficially, it seems that the OE is a key part of New Zealand culture. Departures on such a journey are a common occurrence and doing an OE appears to be an established element of New Zealand social life. Yet, the number of New Zealanders embarking on their OE each year cannot be specified, as OE travellers do not have to declare their intention on departure cards that have to be completed when leaving the country.

As the traditional OE usually involves a year or more outside the country, most of those travelling on their OE would be included in the statistics regarding long-term movements overseas<sup>4</sup> and New Zealand citizens living outside the country. But the size of New Zealand's expatriate community, or 'diaspora' (Collins 2001), is difficult to determine as these citizens are not included in census data. Estimations of the number of New Zealanders overseas range from 500.000 (Bryant & Law 2004) to 800.000 (Bedford as cited by Collins 2001), representing about 22% of the national population. KEA, the Kiwi Expat Association (KEA New Zealand) even puts the figure at one million and offers the most extreme estimation of New Zealand's mobile population.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> According to Statistics New Zealand, '(m)igration statistics are classified as either short-term or long-term movements, based on the intentions expressed by travellers on their arrival/ departure cards. (...) Permanent and long term departures include New Zealand residents departing for an intended period of 12 months or more'. They specify the character of the numbers regarding long-term migration and indicate that 'permanent and long-term migrants include students and those on working and holiday visas or permits, where the person does not intend (at least initially) to remain permanently in the country, but nevertheless is included in statistics on long-term movements' (Statistics New Zealand).

<sup>5</sup> These figures suggest that New Zealand has one of the most mobile populations (Bedford 2001, 2003). In an interview with Simon Collins, Waikato University population expert Professor Richard Bedford explains that a great expatriate community is not an unusual phenomenon, but the nature of a small island country. According to Bedford, a small country is more likely to have a higher share of the population overseas than, for instance, bigger countries such as Canada or the US (Collins 2001).

An OECD study published in 2005 found that among developed countries, New Zealand has one of the highest rates (24.2%) of skilled workforce living outside the country (Dumont & Lemaitre 2005). These numbers imply that New Zealand faces one of the highest rates of Brain Drain within the OECD member states.<sup>6</sup> Despite the difficulty of knowing exactly how many are on their OE, it is possible to say that a significant number of young New Zealanders embark on such journeys.

Why do so many young New Zealanders go away? ‘Much of the rhetoric of brain drain emphasizes financial and career factors’ (Inkson et al. 2006: 30); Inkson and Myers link it to the increase in international migration due to contemporary globalisation. They suggest that this development prompts the OE as ‘media exposure increases people’s awareness of other countries’ and ‘companies internationalise’ (Inkson & Myers 2003: 170). As a result, more people spend time travelling outside their home country and pursue international careers. This explanation aligns with the current trend of worldwide geographical mobility, in particular with respect to labour and work (Beck 1999, Rifkin 2002). However, the OE is not part of a new trend in New Zealand but predates the contemporary movement of people in an increasingly globalised world. New Zealand as a Pacific colonial state has experienced constant patterns of inward as well as outward migrations and has always included citizens with an orientation to countries on the other side of the world. New Zealanders have moved, travelled, and connected to Europe, Africa, the US, and Canada for many decades.

New Zealand author McCarter (2001) considers the history of the OE to date back to the world wars when young New Zealanders left home and explored other parts of the world while serving in the armed services. This opportunity and the risks entailed by the war, however, was predominantly provided for young men. Women did not have the same opportunities to leave home prior to World War II. According to McCarter (2001: 9), ‘(w)hilst young men could satisfy their taste for adventure, often with tragic results, by enlisting in the colonial army to endure the Boer War or the trenches of France, women, by and large, were confided closer to home’. Yet, McCarter also

---

<sup>6</sup> According to the OECD study (2005), amongst the OECD member states, only Ireland (also 24.2%) and Luxembourg (22.2%) have to face a similar rate of brain drain.

indicates that after World War II, there was an increase in the number of women travellers, and since the 1950s, a significant proportion of young adults from New Zealand – both men and women – have left their home to temporarily live overseas.<sup>7</sup>

Available literature on the OE suggests that there are various reasons for young New Zealanders to travel overseas. Some go because they are curious about the lands of their ancestors and want to trace their roots.<sup>8</sup> Others leave as they seek cultural and work experiences in other countries, to escape New Zealand's relative geographic isolation, to encounter differences, or to extend their experiences. As indicated above, for some, the reason to leave may be related to promises of better professional opportunities outside New Zealand. However, the motivations young New Zealanders have for pursuing an OE are often more complex.

Usually, the OE is about new cultural experiences and involves notions of the quest, maturity, and understanding. Sell (2004: 10) indicates that the prospect of 'freedom, escape and independence' may be another motivation for doing an OE. She also suggests that the OE does not only offer opportunities to expand horizons, but also to reinvent oneself (Sell 2004). This thesis picks up on these assumptions and investigates the significance of the OE as a social institution for young New Zealanders. What do they aspire to when planning their OE? Do young adults anticipate their time away as an opportunity to reinvent themselves? Moreover, how do those who facilitate OE travel construct the aspirations of many young New Zealanders? These questions are at the core of my investigation of how power works through the OE and the analysis of ways in which temporarily living and working overseas offers opportunities to pursue the project of the self in a New Zealand context.

---

<sup>7</sup> 'In the 1950's, immigrants records show that 20.000 people a year left New Zealand, intending to return. By 1966, that figure had risen to 200.000 and in 1975 (...), 649.514 New Zealanders left the country temporarily' (McCarter 2001: 8). This comparison of numbers over 20 years shows the increase in overseas travel since the 1950s. This can be led back to the development of air travel, which made travelling accessible to a wider range of people.

<sup>8</sup> McLean (2002) suggests that tracing back ancestry may have been a significant reason for young people travelling to the UK during the post war period. Yet, this does not seem to be a satisfactory explanation for choosing the UK as a contemporary OE destination any more. He indicates more practical reasons associated with a sense of familiarity, the language, and opportunities to find employment or obtain the legal authorization to live and work in the UK through specific visas.



## **A new focus for research on the OE**

Despite its pervasiveness and the cultural significance of the OE in New Zealand, there has been little attention to it as a social practice and as a research topic, it has remained relatively unexplored. Inkson and Myers (2003: 172) suggest that this may in part be due 'to OE being "taken for granted" as part of the national scene'. This thesis is, therefore, positioned within a small body of academic literature on the topic. Yet, considering that for generations, many New Zealanders have embarked on an OE, studies on this phenomenon seem overdue. This has been recognised by Myers and Inkson (2003: 45) who proclaim that '(i)n a country where the OE is as important as it is in New Zealand, we need to understand it better – at individual, organisational and national level'.

Within the small body of literature, most of the research that has been done on the OE has been initiated by economists and predominantly focuses on concerns around consequences for the New Zealand economy (Inkson et al 1997, Inkson et al 1999) or young adults' career development (Inkson & Myers 2003). In these respects, issues around the so-called Brain Drain, the loss of young skilled workers who move overseas due to better job prospects, have been well researched (Inkson et al 1999, Glass & Choy 2001, Carr et al 2005, Inkson et al 2006). A few authors have directed attention to the OE as a social practice and investigated where young adults go, what they learn, and how they readjust to life and employment in New Zealand when they return (Myers & Inkson 2003). Yet, there is a distinct lack of attention in the existing literature on the ways in which the aspiration to personal development contributes to young adults' motivations to travel overseas.

The aim of this thesis is to address this gap and to investigate how young New Zealanders' aspirations to freedom and personal change are also components of a regime of power. I analyse how the OE is simultaneously an opportunity for freedom and choice and a regulated activity or a disciplinary regime.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to a sociological understanding of the New Zealand OE. I will be using theoretical tools which enable a critical examination of

the discourse of freedom to do an OE, which, as far as I am aware, has not previously been the focus of academic discussion.

## **Theoretical framework**

Representations of the OE suggest that it offers young adults a variety of opportunities for choice, agency, and freedom. While predominantly seen as an individual decision and a matter of personal choice, the OE is also socially constructed. This thesis explores the ways in which it is socially and discursively constructed as a life course experience through which power operates because of the promises of freedom and choice. To achieve this, the analysis is theoretically framed by Foucauldian understandings of power and discourse and, moreover, Nikolas Rose's ideas of governance through freedom and the constitution of subjects in advanced liberal democracies (Rose 1999, 1996a). These theoretical resources enable a critical analysis of the OE as both a freely chosen activity and a field of regulations and convention – or governance.

Power can be analysed in ways other than the conventional negative characterisation of it as domination and repression. Foucault offers a different view of power as positive and productive (Foucault 1980, see especially Chapter 6: Truth and Power). Central to his understanding is the role of the subject as both constituted by and disciplined through discourses – the multiple practices, meanings, and beliefs that constitute their environment (Foucault 1978). Using social theory derived from Foucault's approach to power and discourse enables an analysis of the OE as a powerful institution in New Zealand. It allows the exploration of ways in which young adults are socially and discursively constituted as OE travellers.

This thesis particularly focuses on an analysis of the OE against discussions of people as simultaneously free and governed. It aims to illustrate how many young New Zealanders are disciplined by embracing the freedoms associated with the OE. My investigation of the OE as a site of governance through freedom was particularly prompted by my engagement with Nikolas Rose's work (Rose 1999). Using Rose's theoretical approach to governance through freedom enables an exploration of how

power and freedom are intertwined in OE discourses and demonstrates that the freedom to do an OE is subject to certain rules and regulations. It facilitates an investigation of ways in which governance is accomplished through freedoms available through the OE. By employing these theoretical ideas, I investigate ways in which young New Zealanders simultaneously experience freedom, power, and choice as they engage in an institutionalised activity, and ask how they are constructed as ideally free agents or international ambassadors and governed by arrangements such as working holiday agreements.

Drawing on Rose's contribution to ideas about the project of the self facilitates the discussion of how young New Zealanders embarking on their OE are socially constituted and constantly governed. Rose (1999) states that people constantly work on themselves, making up their selves through their lifestyle choices. I investigate ways in which young adults can use the OE to pursue what Rose (1996a) refers to as the project of their selves in a New Zealand context. In this analysis, I do not view them as passive beings, but as agents who exercise choice drawing on available discourses in the context of inter-state regulations on migration and labour markets.

As indicated earlier, I am not aware of any author who has previously focused on ways in which governance is accomplished through the freedoms the OE provides. Through analysing the OE differently and adopting an alternative theoretical approach, this study traverses new ground and therefore makes a useful contribution to research in this field. Studying the discursive construction of the New Zealand OE was not only a new way of looking at the OE, but also an opportunity for me to exercise and develop my theoretical skills.

## **Methodology**

To best investigate the research questions and gain in-depth information about the OE, this thesis adopted a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research seemed particularly appropriate as it permits more depth of understanding than quantitative approaches. This was necessary to investigate the discursive field of the OE – the meanings, ideas, and practices associated with it. To analyse the qualitative

data gathered, I employed a discursive analysis informed by Foucauldian theory. Given the theoretical framework and research agenda of this thesis, a form of Foucauldian discourse analysis seemed most appropriate as it enabled me to explore the OE as a discursively constructed practice in New Zealand.

To gather the information required to conduct an analysis of the OE, I used a process of 'triangulation' (Davidson & Tolich 2003: 34). I began the research by gathering and analysing written and published material about the OE and its New Zealand context. This included the analysis of advertisements, regulations of overseas travel, OE handbooks, OE web pages, and statistics dealing with international migration. This information was particularly useful to investigate the status of the OE in New Zealand, the regulatory framework of overseas travel, and the ways in which opportunities to pursue an OE are constituted by various authorities.

To gather in-depth information about the OE in contemporary New Zealand, this thesis also included an investigative research component: I conducted fieldwork in Christchurch in the winter of 2006 to gather information about ideas, meanings, and common practices, as well as young adults' plans and aspirations associated with life and work elsewhere. This fieldwork component consisted of three research strategies. Firstly, I conducted semi structured in-depth interviews with 18 young New Zealanders aged 18 to 27. All interviewees were planning to go away for an OE within the next few years. The interviewees were contacted either through personal contacts or recruitment advertisements at various tertiary education institutions in Christchurch. The focus of the conversations were the participants' plans for travelling, living, and working outside New Zealand as well as their ideas and aspirations associated with the OE.

Secondly, I distributed 50 questionnaires about the Kiwi OE and how it is considered in New Zealand. This standard questionnaire included questions about young adults' perception of the OE, their general ideas about it, and reasons why temporarily living overseas does or does not appeal to them. The questionnaires were distributed through personal contacts as well as my interview participants. I used the snowballing sampling technique (Davidson & Tolich 2003: 35) for the dispersion of the questionnaire, using my interviewees as my initial starting points who passed it on to

friends, siblings, and flatmates. This method was useful as the respondents were not specified as potential OE travellers but could be both young adults planning to do an OE and those planning to stay in New Zealand.

Thirdly, I explored the possibility of including web-based discussions about the OE as an innovative research method. I used the service offered by Blogger to set up an easy-to-use web page, called a blog, which offered opportunities to comment on statements I made and interact with others via the World Wide Web. My statements were closely related to the research process. I either summarised comments from the interviews or some of the general assumptions about the OE. To recruit participants for these online discussions, I accessed blogs of people currently on their OE and left comments inviting them to visit my research blog and participate in the study. I also distributed the link in my social networks, again using the snowballing technique for further dispersal.

The information gathered through the investigative component of this research enabled me to identify various discourses associated with the OE and to conduct the analysis according to my research agenda.

## **Thesis structure**

The following chapter provides a more detailed outline of the theoretical resources employed in this research. As indicated above, Nikolas Rose's concept of governance through freedom is at the core of this analysis of the OE. He derives the theoretical ideas associated with this approach from Foucault's understandings of power and the constitution of subject positions. For a better understanding of Rose's approach, I first outline some Foucauldian ideas of power, discourse, and the constitution of subject positions, before I move to a more detailed discussion of governance through freedom.

Chapter Three offers an overview of the methodological approach used in this thesis followed by a discussion of the research strategies. I outline the research strategies used to gather the information necessary to conduct an analysis of the OE in

contemporary New Zealand and indicate why they were chosen. I also highlight issues I experienced during my investigative work, in particular with respect to the recruitment of participants at tertiary education institutions other than universities. I indicate ways in which these experiences contribute to my findings of the OE as a discursively constructed social practice. Following the discussion of methodology, methods, and methodological limitations, the next three chapters present the findings of this study, beginning with a focus on fields of possibilities and the engagement of what Rose (1999) has referred to as ruling and independent authorities.

The freedom to embark on an OE rests on regulation, as the combination of work and travel, the working holiday, is only possible because of current reciprocal agreements among nation states with respect to overseas travel and work. The analysis offered in Chapter Four highlights ways in which OE travel is facilitated through ruling and independent authorities – governments, commercial tourism operators, and non-state organisations. Against the background of the theoretical approach employed, I explore how these authorities set up fields of possibilities and create options for young adults to pursue an OE and examine rationales for implementing working holiday schemes.

Chapter Five focuses on what Rose has referred to as conditions for possible actions. It investigates how the field of possible actions available to young adults is shaped more precisely through key features of the specific practices associated with the OE. I illustrate how young adults' plans and actions are shaped by these conditions for possible actions through analysing the finite character of the OE. The investigation of ways in which young adults embrace the finitude of the OE highlights how they are constituted and constitute themselves as OE travellers who return to New Zealand. This chapter goes on to discuss ways in which young adults anticipate their time away through investigating the imaginary of the OE, their perception of relevant regulatory frameworks that shape their travel and work options, and their understandings of why they plan to go in their twenties.

Chapter Six explores the capacities to do an OE available to young New Zealanders and the subject positions constituted by OE discourses. The discussion of capacities to do an OE provides more detailed information on those young adults that are potentially constituted as OE travellers. The analysis indicates that there are different

sets of understandings regarding the OE as a normal thing among young adults involved in various forms of tertiary education. This chapter then examines the subjectivity aspired to by those who are planning to temporarily live and work elsewhere and indicates ways in which young adults expect to use the OE for their personal development. This chapter shows that the OE offers young adults opportunities to work on themselves as they are governed.

Chapter Seven builds on the analysis conducted in the previous chapters and summarizes the key conclusions of this study. The thesis concludes with a focus on how the findings illustrate that it makes sense to analyse the OE as a form of governance through freedom.

## **Chapter Two: Freedom, constraint, and the OE**

---

### **Introduction**

I first heard about the OE as a German exchange student temporarily studying in New Zealand. At that time, I was directly exposed to representations of and talk about the OE as an opportunity to explore other countries, to experience and understand different cultures, and engage in self-development. It appeared to me that living and working abroad for a while was identified as an ideal part of many young New Zealanders' life course – an excellent opportunity for freedom and self exploration. Superficially, the OE seems to be a field of freedom and choice. Yet, a closer look suggests that it is not simply an opportunity for the exercise of personal freedom, nor just undertaken to explore other countries and oneself. The OE is also a field of external regulation and self-governance and as such involves the exercise of various forms of power. Young adults' OE plans are developed in a context of formal rules governing the international movement of citizens as well as dominant ideas about what constitutes an OE, more precisely, a good OE. Against the background of the OE as a field of rules and regulations, I was particularly interested in analysing the notion of it as exclusively an opportunity for freedom and aimed to explore how power works through the OE. This interest shaped my central research question: How is power manifest in the opportunity to choose the freedoms associated with the OE? This chapter discusses the theoretical tools I have used to develop an analysis of the New Zealand OE as simultaneously a field of freedom and constraint – a manifestation of what Nikolas Rose (1999) has referred to as governance through freedom.

### **Developing a theoretical framework**

When developing my approach to analysing the New Zealand OE, I was not interested in simply reconstructing ideas and imaginaries articulated by young adults. I also wanted to distance myself from analysing aspects that have previously been researched



by economists such as career effects or the brain drain in New Zealand. Instead, I aimed to find a sociological approach which looks at the OE as a phenomenon that offers young New Zealanders freedoms but also includes the shaping that takes place through such a social institution. As I explored the OE as a site for sociological research, I became more interested in the relationship between governance and freedom, and this significantly shaped my research agenda.

Which theorists have offered analyses of people simultaneously experiencing choice and regulation? As I thought about ways of theorising the OE, I explored different analysis possibilities with respect to my research interests in governance and freedom. I was introduced to a variety of authors and theoretical concepts including Foucauldian ideas around power and the constitution of subject positions. Through reading Foucault's texts and what other authors have published using his ideas, I encountered Nikolas Rose's discussion of governance through freedom, his expansion of Foucault's account of 'governmentality' (Foucault 1991: 102).<sup>9</sup>

Nikolas Rose has produced various texts offering analyses of how power operates in advanced liberal democracies, where possibilities of directly acting upon people and intervening in their lives are limited (Rose 1990, 1996a, 1999). In looking at various facets of social life, Rose has analysed ways in which social control and the shaping of citizens is possible in contexts where people are thought of as autonomous, free, and freely choosing individuals. He offers analyses that contribute to an understanding of why people choose to behave and act in certain ways without being explicitly ordered by governments or non-state authorities. His way of thinking through how governance through freedom operates appeared to be an appropriate theoretical approach to frame my research agenda regarding the OE. Rose has worked on the ways in which human beings in modern liberal societies understand and act upon themselves and how they are, at the same time, acted upon by governments, non-state organisations, employers, and companies. As I read more of Rose's work, I became convinced that he had

---

<sup>9</sup> Foucault's concept of governmentality refers to his specific understanding of power and the constitution of subject positions – and with it subjects – in advanced liberal democracies. Governmentality refers to the idea that government is not limited to state actors and ruling institutions. The underpinnings of this concept will be outlined later in this chapter. The concept of governmentality facilitates rethinking of the complex relationship between structure and agency, which will also be outlined below.

developed theoretical tools that were useful to analyse the OE as both a way in which young adults work on themselves while being shaped and worked upon by governments, commercial travel operators, and various non-profit organisations.

Rose's concept of governance through freedom is at the core of my analysis of the OE and sets up the frame for both the analysis and the way it is presented in this thesis. It facilitates an investigation of forms of power operating through the OE without excluding the relevance of freedom. In what follows, I offer an account of the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis. As Rose offers a Foucauldian analysis of power, I first discuss key Foucauldian ideas necessary to understand Rose's concept, before giving an account of his approach to governance through freedom and the constitution of subjects in advanced liberal societies.

## **Power/ Discourse**

Sociologists have often defined power as a form of rule that is equated with domination and, ultimately, repression (Weber 1922).<sup>10</sup> The concept of power as domination usually incorporates ideas of a centralized body of power, a ruling regime such as a sovereign or the state, which is legitimised to use force and violence as a means for effective rule over subjects. According to this understanding, power is predominantly thought of in negative terms. Consequently, it is mainly associated with control and constraints and seen as operating 'in a direct and brutally repressive fashion, dispensing with polite things like culture and knowledge' (Hall 2001: 76). Foucault rejects the idea of power as only domination, as he considers it as simplified, negative, and narrow (Foucault 1980: 119). Instead, he was interested in an analysis of power that looks at ways in which it is accomplished through the social practices of citizens. In this thesis, this analysis of power is used to explore the social practices associated with the OE in New Zealand.

---

<sup>10</sup> This sociological concept of power as domination stems from Weber's work on government and bureaucracy and his categorization of authority into three different types, that is traditional, charismatic and legal authority, (*traditionelle Herrschaft, charismatische Herrschaft, legale Herrschaft*) (Weber 1922, Weber 1968). Typical features associated with Weber's definition of power as domination are obedience, hierarchy, and subordination.

For Foucault, power does not necessarily have to be a negative force. On the contrary, he theorizes it as positive and productive. Power does not merely serve to repress and constrain 'but traverses and produces things, it induces knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression' (Foucault 1980: 119). This implies that power acts in an enabling way; it holds the capacity to positively shape what people want and desire and, moreover, to produce the cultural and social features that are part of modern societies (Lemke 2002). When discussing how Nikolas Rose expanded Foucault's approach later in this chapter, I illustrate that it is in part effective because it is experienced as freedom.

For Foucault, power does not function according to a descending hierarchy and is not applied through a sovereign, but is multidimensional (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1982) and seen 'as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth' (Foucault 1980: 98). Instead, power is exercised and works through a netlike organisation in which all individuals participate. In this sense, power is a phenomenon that people are always exercising: Foucault sees us as acting to constitute power rather than being the objects of power exerted by others. Consequently, power is necessary for agency and operates through individuals rather than against them. They are seen 'as the vehicles of power, not its points of application' (Foucault 1980: 98). This suggests that individuals 'are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising power' (Foucault 1980: 98). Analysing the OE as a way in which power is manifest aligns itself with Foucault's idea that power does not inhere in people, but in sets of actions and relationships. The analysis conducted in this thesis aims to illustrate how young New Zealanders both undergo and exercise power through engaging in the practices associated with the OE. This aspect is particularly highlighted in the investigation of capacities to do an OE and subject positions offered in Chapter Six. Foucault's analysis suggests that power has to be analysed in terms of processes and its effects rather than its sources. For this reason, I will highlight some of the effects of power associated with the OE on young New Zealanders.

Foucault thinks of power as operating through discourse. As noted by McHoul and Grace (1997: 23), for him, discourse ‘moves in and as the flows of power’. Hall picks up on the usual notion of discourse as focussing on oral or written language and argues that ‘(n)ormally, the term ‘discourse’ is used as a linguistic concept. It simply means passages of connected writing or speech’ (Hall 2001: 71). For Foucault, however, discourse is ‘not a language or a text but a historically, socially and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms, categories, and beliefs’ (Foucault 1972: 92). These sets of related statements or discourses use words and terms not only to describe but also to interpret and constitute reality. In this way, discourses construct topics and create systems of meaning and meaningful practice within society. Foucault argues that ‘it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together’ (Foucault 1978: 100). For him, discourses are the practices that ‘systematically form the objects of which they speak’ (Foucault 1972: 92). Thus, it is through speaking of objects like the person on their OE that they are constituted and made describable as objects, practices, meanings, or knowledge. According to this analysis, OE discourses are the practices that constitute the OE in New Zealand and bring it into being. At the same time, actors who engage in OE practices are constituted through these discourses.<sup>11</sup>

Following Foucault, Burr (1995: 57) suggests that discourses can be considered as providing ‘a frame of reference, a way of interpreting the world and giving it meaning’. This aligns with Foucault’s ideas regarding the ways in which objects take shape through discourse. Through creating meaning and offering ways of interpreting the world, discourses frame people’s views on the world and their social contexts. Foucault (1978) suggests that discourses are not independent of the institutional context or society in which they occur, but intimately tied to it and the way it is run. This indicates that discourses not only shape social practices, but are also shaped by them. Power works through the creation of discourses that people can insert themselves into through engaging in certain practices. Foucault’s conception of discursive power contributes to an understanding of how power operates through OE discourses and how it shapes

---

<sup>11</sup> This aligns with Foucault’s approach to the constitution of subject positions, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Foucault argues that people are discursively constructed as conscious agents whose actions are intentional. Yet, while experiencing themselves as agents, they are socially and discursively constructed. Thus, young adults who participate in OE discourses are both active agents in and constituted through these discourses.

young adults' opportunities, actions, and practices in terms of temporarily living and working overseas.

According to Foucauldian understandings of power,<sup>12</sup> discursive power does not only shape practices and constitute persons through removing opportunities to act. It also makes options of agency available to them. More precisely, discourses constitute fields of possibilities that set up the conditions for possible actions and choices. They define a space of possible actions within which people are enabled to act. Thus, it is through discourses that people achieve the capacity to act. While allowing space for the individual to actively engage with social situations, discourses also constrain people's behaviour, as the range of possible experiences is circumscribed by available discourses. The ability to act means the ability to act *in certain ways* defined through the field of possibilities. It is in this way that power works through structuring and guiding actions. Following Foucauldian ideas, Burr (2002) points out that while enabled to act, people simultaneously experience the constraining effects of power operating through discourse. Discursive power constrains them, for instance, indirectly as the environment in which actions take place and can be conducted – either successfully or unsuccessfully. However, people are not restricted in a way that takes away their ability to experience themselves as agents. It is the capacity to attend to the ability to choose and act while being shaped that makes a Foucauldian inspired approach most useful for a project dealing with people's actions and decisions such as the research on the New Zealand OE discussed in this thesis.

I will address the understandings of discourses as simultaneously enabling and constraining in my analysis and investigate ways in which OE discourses both enable and constrain young New Zealanders with respect to overseas work and travel. In Chapters Four and Five, I discuss fields of possibilities and conditions for possible actions, which includes key features and specific practices associated with the OE. These discussions will highlight ways in which OE discourses enable young adults to

---

<sup>12</sup> Ideas related to this understanding have been articulated by Foucault in various texts such as *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), *The History of Sexuality* (1978) or 'Truth and Power' in *Power/Knowledge* (1980). These ideas have been taken up by various contemporary theorists such as Burr (1995, 2002) or McHoul & Grace (1997).

act. Following Foucault and Rose's analyses, I will also illustrate that they enable young adults to only act in specific ways and show that the formal frameworks of overseas work and travel as well as certain characteristics of the OE such as its finite character define ways in which an OE may be pursued.

The enabling and constraining aspects of the discourses that shape the conduct of those who do an OE have the capacity to produce and constitute particular subjects. Discourses define subject positions and shape subjects and, moreover, subjectivity,<sup>13</sup> including the forms of subjectivity associated with the OE.

### **The constitution of subject positions**

For Foucault, discourses play an active role in the construction of subjects as they make available subject positions for individuals to take up (Foucault 1972). According to this approach, people can only exist as subjects in discourse and, in particular, 'only exist meaningfully within the discourse about them' (Hall 2001: 73). This implies that people's ways of thinking and acting are always related to discourses they engage with and participate in. Discourses foster certain ways of being and doing while diminishing and denying the possibility of being and doing in different ways. They embody aspirations and hopes that people attempt to live out in their day-to-day lives and, through this, shape their conduct. Discourses make different options of being available to people and offer a number of subject positions to them. This can be considered as providing the content of people's subjectivity (Foucault 1978, Burr 1995).<sup>14</sup> This means that people can be seen as the negotiators of their own identity. Yet, following Foucault's approach to the constitution of subject positions through discourse, Burr (1995) indicates that once people have located themselves in certain discourses, they inevitably come to experience the world and themselves in ways associated with that perspective. This is the source of both the power to act and constraints on action.

---

<sup>13</sup> Burr defines subjectivity as 'the sum total of the subject positions in discourse that they [*people*] currently occupy. The fact that some of these positions are fleeting or in a state of flux means that our identity is never fixed but always in process, always open to change' (Burr 2003: 124).

<sup>14</sup> In *The History of Sexuality* (1978), in particular Part One and Two, Foucault illustrates that even sexuality is discursively constructed, while assumed to be an expression of basic desires.

Hall (2001) suggests that through engaging with and participating in discourses, people gain a sense of subjectivity. 'People may differ (...) but they will not be able to take meaning until they have identified with those positions which the discourse constructs, *subjected* themselves to its rules, and hence become the *subjects of its power/knowledge*' (Hall 2001: 80, italics in original). This implies that discursive power both enables and constrains subjectivity, as it produces certain kinds of selves.

These ideas will be used when I investigate the discursive construction of some young New Zealanders' subjectivity. In Chapter Six, I analyse the subject positions and capacities to act constructed through OE discourses. Analysing key aspects of the OE articulated by young adults planning to do an OE illustrates ways in which OE discourses make options of being available. Further, understandings they expressed of themselves as OE travellers as opposed to those not planning to do an OE illustrate how young adults' engagement with discursive practices shapes how they experience themselves.

This brief summary of Foucault's understandings of power/knowledge and the social constitution of subjects is a backdrop to a more detailed account of governmentality – Foucault's specific way of making sense of advanced liberal societies. In the following section of this chapter, I outline the concept of governmentality and indicate its relevance for an analysis of the OE in New Zealand.

## **Governance through freedom**

Foucault and others have used the term governmentality to refer to networks of power in advanced liberal democracies (Foucault 1991, Rose 1996b, Rose 1999). It is associated with analysing how effective rule can be achieved in contexts in which power is increasingly de-centralised and where people's ways of being and acting are shaped through discourses of freedom. Power in these contexts is characterised by a shift away from the direct exercise of force as a means to effective rule. Instead, effective rule and government is achieved through people willingly choosing to act in certain ways.

Governmentality is not limited to the actions of governments and state actors but includes wider forms of rule – or ‘government outside the state’ (Lukes 2005: 97). This form of power is effected through state authorities, infrastructural powers, networks of power, or authorities that are not part of the formal and informal state apparatus. Power is exercised covertly through these various networks and sets of relationships. Lukes exemplifies forms of government outside the state more precisely and states ‘such ‘governing’ is done by employers, administrative authorities, social workers, parents, schoolteachers, medical personnel, and experts of all kind’ (Lukes 2005: 97). In this sense, power is widely distributed among sets of social actors and institutions. These various forms of rule constitute the ways in which individuals shape and construct themselves in an active fashion, by self-government and practices of the self, while governed and regulated by discursively constructed individual choice.

Nikolas Rose expands Foucault’s account of governmentality as a historical phenomenon and facilitates its use as an analytic tool for everyday problems and practices. He offers a precise way of thinking through how governance through freedom in modern liberal societies operates, which is relevant to this analysis of the OE as a form of governmentality.

As a form of governmentality, governance does not oppress, but, instead, ‘is conceived of most generally, as encompassing all those more or less rationalized programs and strategies for the conduct of conduct’ (Rose 1996a: 29). As noted by McManus, Rose approaches ‘liberal freedom as a practice rather than a principle of liberal rule’ (McManus 2005: 431) and argues that people in liberal societies are not primarily governed through direct control or discipline, but through education, empowerment, and freedom. Discourses of freedom are the resources people use as they engage in everyday practices.

Rose (1999) argues that governing through freedom takes place through shaping individuals’ aspirations and needs. In this respect, freedom has become a means to ensure that people conduct themselves and make choices in desired ways according to powerful interests, without overtly imposing them. ‘Government works by acting at a distance upon these choices, forging a symmetry between attempts of individuals to



make life worthwhile for themselves and the political values of consumption' (Rose 1990: 10). The liberal art of government then consists in the construction of free subjects and refers to the way in which authorities act on the freedom possible in social contexts in order to shape or direct the conduct of others. This is done through state actors, non-state authorities, and personal aspirations. According to Rose's approach, people are most governed by that which gives them most sense of freedom and offers them various options to act. Following Rose, I discuss ways in which state and non-state authorities simultaneously construct and work on the freedom for young New Zealanders to embark on an OE. The aim of the analysis of young New Zealanders' plans, aspirations, and expectations is to highlight ways in which they experience freedom as they are governed.

For Rose, the practice of freedom is achieved by generating alignments between various authorities and people's personal aspirations. The various authorities consist of ruling institutions, such as state actors who pursue certain political aims, and independent authorities, who are, for instance, concerned with people's health, education, or economic matters. The interests of these authorities have to be brought into alignment with personal aspirations, the sense of what it means to be a good person – in this thesis, the sense of what it means to be a good person refers to being a worldly, tolerant, and cosmopolitan New Zealander. Following Rose, McManus states that generating these alignments is about 'lining up and forging connections between the calculations of disparate authorities and personal aspirations of freedom' (McManus 2005: 433, following Rose 1999: 49). To achieve this, Rose (1999: 50) states that each of these authorities and individuals have to 'translate the values of others into its own ambitions, judgments and conduct'. The alignments are generated most effectively when people embrace those forms of behaviour as chosen and desired that are consistent with the intentions of the different authorities and, consequently, when they conduct themselves in certain desired ways.<sup>15</sup> One way to achieve this is through the normalisation of a

---

<sup>15</sup> The practice of going to the gym and aspiring to the ideal of becoming slim, fit, and well trained exemplifies the way in which people's desires and aspirations as well as choices and lifestyles have been shaped by various forms of power and, furthermore, how the injunctions of different authorities (for example the advocacy of fitness) and personal aspirations have become aligned.

particular form of behaviour. In this thesis, it is achieved through the normalisation of a particular way of travelling overseas as an OE.

The idea of governmental interests as embraced in people's aspirations will be taken up in the discussion of the formal frameworks governing the movement of citizens offered in Chapter Four. Later in the thesis, I illustrate that young New Zealanders embrace those forms of doing an OE that align with outcomes state and non-state authorities pursue when they set up fields of possibilities associated with overseas work and travel.

### **The normalising discourse**

The term normalisation describes the identification of normal and abnormal behaviour and relates to the processes by which people are encouraged to reach conformity with those forms that have been established as normal. This is achieved through structuring, arranging, and restricting the spaces within which people can act and function. As they aspire to what is defined as desirable within society, every individual is always subjected to the 'constant division between the normal and the abnormal' (Foucault 1995: 199). Consequently, people are normalised as they apply to themselves standards of behaviour that are set within their environment and in the environments in which they seek to be incorporated.

For normalisation to shape people's conduct, it is necessary that they actively aspire to act in certain ways and craft particular forms of subjectivity. In this respect, they are induced to be a certain kind of subject, a normal subject. Foucault argues that the aspiration to be a normal subject is controlled by the 'power of the norm' (Foucault 1982: 184). The intention to utilize the OE in order to demonstrate being a 'normal' young New Zealander is discussed in Chapter Six. This discussion highlights ways in which young adults actively engage in the identification of normal and abnormal behaviour and, moreover, that what is considered as normal is associated with young adults' participation in specific discursive practices.

McManus draws attention to Rose's discussion of discourses of civility as a way in which the categorization of normal and abnormal behaviour is achieved. She states that

these discourses shape ‘what it means to be a civilised person, to be a free citizen’ (McManus 2005: 433). According to Rose (1999), the categorization of normal and abnormal behaviour achieved through discourses of civility shapes and manages people’s conduct in desirable ways as they hope to act in ways consistent with what is considered to be normal for a civilised person. It is through these discourses that the desired subjectivity people aspire to is constructed and, moreover, that normal citizens are generated. As Rose (1999: 69) considers freedom to be ‘inextricably linked to a norm of civility’, it contributes to people’s sense of themselves as free. I find Rose’s discussion of civility useful for my project as it opens up the discussion of how the OE contributes to the definition of what it means to be a normal citizen in New Zealand. It contributes to an understanding of how many young New Zealanders are constituted and constitute themselves as OE travellers. Some theorists such as Rose suggest that in advanced liberal societies, the desired subjectivity is one that is focused on the project of the self, a concept outlined in the following section.

### **The project of the self**

Like a number of contemporary European sociologists (Giddens 1995, Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002), some of which are influenced by Foucault, others in debate with him, Rose looks at how people are involved in the project of the self. In these respects, he picks up on ideas developed by Giddens who considers the development of selves in the late modern age to be a project to be worked out by individual agents.<sup>16</sup> In a way that echoes some of Giddens’ analysis, Rose works on the idea of people making up themselves and ‘shaping their own lives through choices they make among the forms of life open to them’ (Rose 1990: 226). He (1990: 226) argues that people are encouraged to be ‘entrepreneurs of themselves’ who shape their own lives and ‘an autonomous

---

<sup>16</sup> Giddens (1991: 5) focuses on a ‘reflexive project of the self’ and the ways in which individuals find meaning and create narratives of identity through lifestyle choices they make using available social understandings and material resources. To describe his approach to selves as construed as a project, Giddens (1995: 75) states that ‘(w)e are, not what we are, but what we make of ourselves’. In his theory of structuration (Giddens 1999), which offers one sociological approach to the constitution of subjects, Giddens locates individuals as social actors or agents in the centre of social life, embedded in what has been referred to as social structures. His strong emphasis on human agency is what distinguishes his theoretical approach from poststructuralist thought. Grey (1994: pp. 480 – 481) states that compared with Rose, Giddens ‘offers less insight into the specific techniques through which the project of the self is conducted’.

identity for themselves through choices in taste, music, goods, styles and habitus' (Rose 1999: 178). They are free citizens, endowed with and following personal desires, making choices driven by self-fulfilment. Decisions they make regarding their lives, styles, and tastes represent ways of making up themselves, 'driven by motives of self-fulfilment' (Rose 1990: 115). At the same time, these decisions and choices offer the opportunity to take up lifestyles that are promoted as desirable – and thus, they are ways to achieve socially constituted forms of subjectivity.

My particular interests lie in the ways in which the OE can be analysed as an illustration of how the project of the self is pursued in a New Zealand context. I investigate how the OE offers young adults the opportunity to make up themselves and to become what they consider to be the ideal young New Zealander as, for instance, demonstrating initiative and choice through exercising the freedom to have an OE.

Rose does not only value the freedom to make up oneself as a liberating opportunity for people. For him, they 'are not merely 'free to choose', but *obliged to be free*, to understand and enact their lives in terms of choice' (Rose 1999: 87, italics in original). In liberal societies, to be free has become an imperative rather than a choice. Individuals are required to take responsibility and to regulate themselves – in a manner that confirms that they are freely choosing individuals. Rose's idea of an obligation to be free will be used in Chapter Five where I analyse aspects of how young New Zealanders choose to do an OE as a way to demonstrate that they are freely choosing and, what is more, free citizens.

Rose indicates that through the freedom to choose, people are obliged to work on themselves and to develop certain lifestyles by exercising personal choice. However, they can only be free in a way that aligns with authorities' understandings of being free. Ironically, 'we believe (...) we are, freely, choosing our freedom' (Rose 1990: 11). People imagine themselves as freely making choices and pursuing their own interest, while they act as disciplined selves within clearly defined fields of possibilities according to the interests of governments and non-state actors. This indicates that the individual only has the freedom to be normal.

In this way, governmentality is used to explain how power works in liberal democracies; moreover, how it works in both constraining and enabling modes. Rose's extended concept of governance through freedom offers the opportunity to apply the Foucauldian idea of power as productive to the analysis of everyday situations and problems such as the OE in New Zealand. This perspective allows me to understand the OE and how power works through it in particular ways. In the following section of this chapter, I will use these ideas to identify the tension between the OE as a disciplinary regime that young adults are subjected to and the individual freedom with which it is commonly associated. This tension will be addressed in more detail in Chapters Five and Six when I analyse the research material relating to young adults' desires and plans gathered through the investigative component of this study.

### **The OE as a form of governance through freedom**

Foucault and Rose both analyse regimes of power and the constitution of subjects in advanced liberal societies. Their approach involves an examination of how power works in liberal democracies and of the practices through which people become subjects. In the following chapters, I will use these theoretical tools to explore how freedom and power are constituted through the OE as a set of social practices that also constitute selves. Analysing the OE from a governmentality perspective offers the opportunity to critically examine the way in which it is constituted as an expression of unlimited freedom and based on free choice. This involves an analysis of the OE as a set of practices, aspirations, and forms of regulations that demonstrate people's freedom, individuality, and resourcefulness while also constituting them as disciplined selves.

My preliminary investigation of existing literature indicated that an analysis of the New Zealand OE inspired by Foucauldian ideas and concentrating on freedom, power and the constitution of subjects has not been conducted before. While economic, monetary and

professional matters have been addressed, the constitution of subjects through the OE and how power works through it have not been the focus of existing analyses.<sup>17</sup>

Following Rose's approach to governance through freedom, the freedom to choose an OE is constructed through alignments between a range of discourses. To develop an account of how these alignments are generated, it is necessary to analyse the discursive field of the OE and the various intentions and interests that come into play within it. Following Rose, this requires a complex investigation and examination of different authorities associated with the OE as well as personal aspirations regarding overseas travel articulated by young New Zealanders. The authorities associated with overseas work and travel and their interests will be addressed in Chapter Four, before moving on to an analysis of what young New Zealanders articulated regarding their plans, desires, and personal aspirations in Chapters Five and Six.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that the analysis of the OE in New Zealand in terms of Foucauldian ideas around governmentality offers a new way of understanding and examining the OE, which has not been previously explored within academic research. Foucauldian analyses of power and Nikolas Rose's concept of governance through freedom offer the opportunity to critically analyse the way in which OE discourses operate within New Zealand. This enables an investigation of the OE as a powerful social phenomenon in New Zealand and helps to explore the construction and practices of power associated with it. Moreover, an analysis of the OE as a form of governance through freedom accounts for its potential contribution to the constitution of young New Zealanders' identities.

---

<sup>17</sup> I have indicated earlier that the limited body of academic literature on the OE draws on research that focuses on the economic dimension of work abroad and most of the writing in this field focuses on the implications of the OE for the New Zealand economy (Inkson et. al. 1997, Inkson et al 1999). In this respect, a particular area of interest is the brain drain, which has been well researched by various academics and, as a result, addressed as a problem by the New Zealand Government. This problematic has also been dealt with in print media (Cohen 2005, Collins 2005, Watkin 2005). Other studies on the topic focus on different ways of pursuing an OE and young people's intentions for going away such as career development or the prospect of higher earnings (Myers & Inkson 2003).

Previous research on the OE predominantly derived from quantitative research. The research reported in this thesis offers an alternative analysis of the OE. An important goal was to challenge prevailing assumptions about the OE and – inspired by Foucauldian ideas – to analyse it as a social phenomenon embedded in discourses. This way of looking at the OE suggests a particular method for the analysis. Due to the lack of qualitative research on the topic, it has been necessary to conduct a significant amount of primary research to be able to explore the OE as a form of governance through freedom and to identify political aims, independent authorities, and personal aspirations associated with it. To collect the material required for these investigations, various research methods have been employed. These will be outlined and discussed in the next chapter.

## Chapter Three: Methodology and methods

---

### Introduction

The principal aim of this research is to investigate how the social practices associated with the New Zealand OE contribute to the accomplishment of what Nikolas Rose (1999: 68) has referred to as governance ‘in accordance with freedom’. The previous chapter has offered an account of the theoretical underpinnings used to conduct the analysis; this chapter goes on to look at the ways in which I have acquired the information necessary to examine the OE as a discursively constructed practice and to conduct a critical analysis of it as a strategy for the pursuit of freedom. To be able to identify different authorities that articulate OE discourses and to analyse the OE as both an opportunity for freedom as well as a field of norms, rules, expectations, and constraints, I gathered as much diverse information about this travel phenomenon as possible and investigated dominant OE discourses. The process of gathering this information required a multifaceted research strategy. I accessed background information and collected existing documents relevant to overseas travel, before investigating young adults’ personal OE plans and aspirations through face to face interviews, questionnaires, and contributions to an online forum.

This chapter provides a detailed account of how I have approached the analysis discussed in this thesis. I begin with a brief summary of the methodology, which is followed by an account of the steps taken at each stage of the research process and the different research strategies employed. I then go on to discuss experiences I had as I conducted research on a specifically New Zealand phenomenon as a foreigner temporarily living in New Zealand. The chapter concludes with some reflections on the research process and examines methodological issues I encountered while carrying out this project.



## Methodology

My interest in analysing the discursive construction of the New Zealand OE meant that I wanted to access the meanings that people attribute to the OE. To achieve this, I adopted a qualitative research methodology. Complex qualitative information was necessary for a thorough and in-depth investigation of the OE, the different social networks, state, and non-state organisations involved in constructing OE discourses and how New Zealand subjects are constructed through them. This approach was also consistent with the theoretical tools I used in this project.

The material gathered from a range of different sources was analysed using a form of discourse analysis that draws on Foucauldian social theory, more specifically on his definition of discourses offered in Chapter Two. This analysis was particularly shaped by my interest in sets of generalised understandings about the OE represented in different forms of texts, rather than an investigation of the content of young adults' OE plans and aspirations. A discursive analysis informed by Foucauldian ideas led to an investigation that was less focussed on the detail of young adults' travel plans and more on how the OE is framed in a New Zealand context. In general, this form of analysis 'seeks to make explicit the connections between text and wider social practice' (Jacobs 2006: 143). In these respects, texts can be read to identify the discourses articulated and ways in which they construct meaning in the social environments in which they occur. This form of analysing text enabled me to investigate how the social practice of doing an OE is facilitated in New Zealand and how meanings with respect to young adults' actions and decisions relating to temporarily living and working overseas are constituted through them. Using this analysis, I aimed to investigate the discourses that young New Zealanders are part of and active in when they make choices with respect to their OE. Given the theoretical framework of this thesis, this type of analysis seemed most appropriate to investigate the OE as a practice of governance through freedom.

As discourses can be identified in various ways, this research involved an investigation of different forms of discursive traces of the OE in available published texts as well as the texts generated by my own investigative work. These included interview transcripts, questionnaires, blog entries about the OE, and notes I made on informal encounters such

as the responses of some students to invitations to participate in this project. At the initial stage of this research, I searched for any written text relating to the OE or overseas travel in New Zealand. This included, for instance, academic and newspaper articles, guidebooks, visual representations, travel pamphlets, and advertisements published by different travel agencies. An analysis of these texts shaped my investigative work and the questions I posed in face to face interviews. Once I had generated new research material, I analysed the transcripts of interviews as well as responses to the questionnaires and the web-based discussions, which focused on OE plans and motivations as well as understandings of self and others associated with doing an OE.

As a strategy to explore my research questions and gather the information required to conduct the proposed analysis of the OE, I used a process of triangulation. ‘Triangulation is the use of multiple sources of information, methods, theories and techniques to generate a variety of data which measure the social phenomena under investigation’ (Davidson & Tolich 2003: 34). The value of this process lies in the possibility of accessing the strengths of each method, while reducing the limitations of a single method (Walter 2006a). In a context in which there was little existing information available about how young adults conceptualise the OE and their motivations to pursue it, it seemed appropriate to use different research methods as the best way to explore this topic.

## **Representing the OE – published texts, websites, and advertisements**

I started my investigations by collecting as much existing textual information related to the OE as possible. First, I searched the Internet and gathered material about the OE and the New Zealand context to gain a broad understanding of the resources young New Zealanders draw upon as they make plans for their journey overseas. This online search produced links to various websites, some of which linked to commercial operators offering OE packages, others linked to Government sites and, with it, more formal information about overseas travel such as visa requirements. The search also produced links to private websites that various people set up to describe experiences they had

while away.<sup>18</sup> The presence of all these different sources of information on the internet drew my attention to the significance of the OE in contemporary New Zealand. The initial process of gathering information also involved the search for published literature about the OE, tourism more generally and New Zealand culture. Due to a lack of academic literature analysing the OE, the investigation of existing published information primarily consisted of an analysis of newspaper and magazine articles, brochures, advertisements, or guidebooks. In these respects, I mainly focused on New Zealand magazines that comment on current affairs and social issues, such as *North & South* or the *NZ Listener*, as well as specific books related to the OE, such as *The Big OE Companion* (Sell 2004) or the *Big OE Guide* (YHA New Zealand 1997). Initial attempts to identify written texts from various sources on the OE were supplemented by anecdotes. Talk about my research topic prompted informal accounts about the OE and discussion of the significance of embracing opportunities for work and travel outside New Zealand as a young adult. These conversations occurred with other students at the University of Canterbury, flatmates, friends, as well as their friends and family members.

This process of acquiring information about the OE was not only essential for defining the research agenda; it was also particularly important as a way of familiarising myself as researcher and outsider with the ways in which the OE is represented and imbued with meaning in New Zealand.

### *Analytical strategies*

Following Rose's theoretical approach, the analysis of available published information primarily included what he refers to as various authorities involved in OE discourses – governments, non-governmental organisations, commercial, and non-commercial travel operators. Having identified both independent authorities as well as ruling institutions involved in OE discourses, I searched for information required to conduct an analysis of

---

<sup>18</sup> While these private websites illustrated how OE travellers use the internet to describe their travel experiences, the information provided was not particularly relevant for this analysis. These pages were mainly about travel experiences and focused on the content of young adults' OE. They are not included in the analysis, as I was not interested in what people actually do on their OE, but how they anticipate the OE as an opportunity for freedom.

the ways in which they set up and shape the field of possibilities associated with OE travel. When analysing the material, I paid close attention to the ways in which these authorities constitute and shape OE discourses available in the contexts in which young adults make decisions with respect to their OE. To investigate actions, interests, and aspirations articulated by governments, I accessed information on immigration laws, visa agreements and historic entitlements to live and work in another country. I accessed websites that provide information about different types of visas and, in particular, New Zealand's travel agreements with other countries. Through this, I acquired detailed information about different existing agreements that enable young New Zealanders to temporarily live and work elsewhere.

At this stage, the research material suggested that working holiday agreements seem to be central to many young adults' pursuit of an OE. After I had found a list of countries that have established working holiday schemes with New Zealand, I accessed the respective embassy websites to gain more detailed and updated information on these agreements. If these websites did not provide enough information, I contacted the embassies via e-mail, asking for further detail. Most responses did not provide the information I required, but provided directions with respect to how I could access application forms for the working holiday visa. Attempts to establish personal contact with embassies were therefore not particularly forthcoming and I mostly depended on the information provided either online through the embassies or through travel agencies. The material gathered during this part of the research indicated that the freedom to do an OE is constructed through the regulatory frameworks that govern the international travel and work opportunities for citizens. It also indicated the simultaneous aspect of freedom and constraint that characterises the OE. This is discussed in Chapter Four.

While searching for published accounts, I also accessed information on similar travel activities, namely the historical concept of the Grand Tour and the contemporary British gap-year. These phenomena have been presented in Chapter One to contextualise the OE historically and comparatively and to identify ways in which the New Zealand OE might be unique.

To explore the involvement of what Rose (1999: 49) has called ‘independent authorities’, I accessed written material and online sources related to the tourism industry and some non-governmental organisations. To investigate the involvement of the tourism industry, I collected and analysed travel pamphlets and brochures distributed by commercial travel agencies and specific OE travel organisations.<sup>19</sup> The analysis of this material was particularly important to explore the ways in which the tourism industry shapes both OE discourses and the range of possible actions available to those contemplating doing an OE. The way in which these agencies and organisations represent the experience of temporarily living and working overseas and how they set up OE travel opportunities were the focus of this analysis. To investigate how independent authorities articulate OE discourses, I also included New Zealand universities and the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services Association (RSA) in the analysis. To gain information on how they shape the range of possible actions associated with the OE, I accessed the websites of different universities in New Zealand and searched for options they offer with respect to study, work, and travel outside New Zealand. I also contacted the Career’s Advisory Services at the University of Canterbury and encountered the options regarding travelling, working, and studying abroad that they offer for students. To explore the involvement of the RSA, I accessed their webpage and analysed their ANZAC remembrance campaign. A particular focus of this analysis was on the way they use the OE in visual representations to communicate to young adults.

As indicated earlier, analysing the OE as a form of governance through freedom not only involves an investigation of various authorities, but also of the discourses of young adults. Therefore, I also attended to the ways on which the OE features in young adults’ narratives about their lives and investigated their personal plans and aspirations associated with the OE. This additional information was acquired through fieldwork.

---

<sup>19</sup> Here, I focused on STA Travel, a travel agency specialising in student travel deals, and organisations such as International Exchange Programs (IEP), which offer specific OE deals for young adults from New Zealand.

## **Fieldwork – young adults’ narratives about themselves**

To gather information about young adults’ plans and personal aspirations regarding overseas work and travel, I conducted fieldwork in Christchurch in the winter of 2006. The fieldwork component of this study consisted of three different research strategies, namely semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and web-based discussions. These strategies all involved interaction with participants. I was aware of possible ethical issues that may occur when interacting directly with young adults to gather information, such as unintentional manipulation or an inappropriate treatment of participants. Thus, before conducting any fieldwork, I applied for approval of this research project from the Human Ethics Committee of the School of Sociology and Anthropology. This was granted in July 2006. This particular requirement offered the opportunity to become aware of the details and formal procedures that are involved in the process of conducting fieldwork in New Zealand. It also required careful definition of the aims of the study and how I would use information generated through it.

For the research strategies employed as part of the original research for this thesis, I developed separate information sheets for interviewees and questionnaire respondents that covered the core details about the project (See Appendix A, B). The information sheets for interviewees were always distributed before I conducted the interviews, whereas the information sheets and the questionnaire were distributed at the same time. In these sheets, I summarised the project, indicated who I was and how I would conduct the research. I also discussed what participating in the project entailed and what interviewees and questionnaire respondents could do if they had any concerns about their participation in the project. I indicated anonymity as well as confidentiality of any information provided. The young adults I approached were then able to make an informed decision about whether or not they wanted to participate in the study. Informed consent was given either by signing a consent form with respect to the interviews (See Appendix C) or by completing the questionnaire. The information process was slightly different for the web-based discussions as the details about the research were provided on the web page (See Appendix D). As part of the blog description, I indicated the research purpose as well as the anonymity of comments made. However, I mentioned that as the OE blog was a public forum, any information

provided could be accessed by other people. Thus, while the comments were anonymous through the possibility of choosing a pseudonym, confidentiality could not be guaranteed.

## **Semi structured interviews**

As I was interested in exploring young adults' personal aspirations regarding overseas work and travel, their reflections on the OE more generally, and meanings they gave to it, talking to young New Zealanders who were planning to pursue an OE seemed to be the best means to find out in-depth details about their plans, desires, and expectations, as well as the meanings they attributed to their choices and those of others. I chose semi-structured interviews to do this. In total, I conducted 17 semi-structured interviews with 18 young New Zealanders aged 18 to 27, each interview lasting between 30 and 60 minutes.

### *Recruiting participants – the sample for the semi-structured interviews*

Initially, I aimed to recruit approximately 20 interview participants aged 18 to 30 who were either studying or in employed positions and planning to travel overseas for their OE within the next few years. When approaching people to participate in the study in face to face situations, I introduced myself as a student at the University of Canterbury who conducts research on the New Zealand OE for an MA in Sociology. When they showed interest in my study, I described my particular interests in the OE in more detail and indicated how I learned about this phenomenon while temporarily studying in New Zealand as a study abroad student at Massey University. Sometimes, talk with friends and flatmates about what I was doing also resulted in the recruitment of participants. However, recruitment in face to face situations was not my main approach and I recruited most participants through the strategies described below.

Following my intention to recruit both students and participants in employed positions, I recruited nine students and nine people employed in a variety of jobs in Christchurch who were planning to resign and travel overseas for their OE (See Appendix E). Most of the participants in paid work were recruited through personal contacts in combination with the snowball sampling technique. ‘Snowball’ sampling technique is a common

means by which qualitative researchers generate a sample: a small band of likely informants having been identified, these informants are relied on to generate contacts with other people who share the activity the researcher is interested in exploring' (Davidson & Tolich 2003: 35). According to this technique, I made use of those participants I already had to find more potential interviewees and asked each of them to recommend someone they knew who also wanted to pursue an OE (Walter 2006b). As I recruited five male and four female employees for participation in the study, the recruitment strategies for participants in paid work can be considered successful.

To recruit students, I advertised at different tertiary education institutions in Christchurch, namely the University of Canterbury, Lincoln University, the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology (CPIT), the Christchurch College of Education, the Ruben Blades Hairdressing Academy, and the New Zealand College of Early Childhood Education (See Appendix F). This variety of institutions was chosen to explore whether different qualifications and educational backgrounds are related to particular ways of pursuing an OE. With respect to the latter two training institutions in the fields of early childhood education and hairdressing, for instance, my interest was in the transferable job skills students were acquiring that could potentially enhance their mobility in terms of working overseas. Initially, I thought this might have an effect on both the number of students from these institutes planning to go overseas as well as the ways in which they are planning to pursue their OE. Recruiting participants through these advertisements, however, did not work as initially planned, as the invitation to participate was not taken up equally at the different institutions. The strategy to recruit participants through advertisements was successful at the University of Canterbury, where I was studying. There, I recruited the majority of participating students through my advertisements as well as personal contacts. Recruiting participants at tertiary education institutions other than the University of Canterbury, however, became one of the challenges of this research.

I experienced great difficulties in recruiting participants from the Christchurch Teacher's College, the Hairdressing Academy, CPIT, and the College of Early Childhood Education and did not receive any response to my initial advertisement from students at these institutions. These difficulties made me re-assess my recruitment



strategies; I had to think of different approaches. To invite more people to participate in my study, I designed pamphlets presenting the research and distributed them personally at the New Zealand College of Early Childhood Education, CPIT, and – to include another education institution – the Avonmore Tertiary Academy (See Appendix G). However, these additional attempts to recruit more students were not fruitful and I did not recruit any participants from either CPIT, the Christchurch Teacher's College, or Avonmore. Through personal contacts, I was eventually able to recruit both a student from the New Zealand College of Early Childhood Education and a graduate from the hairdressing course at Avonmore Tertiary Academy, currently working as a hairdresser in Christchurch. While I could not recruit any students from CPIT, the interactions I had with some CPIT students as I attempted to recruit participants were revealing in their own right. These will be discussed later in this chapter and are also included in the analysis in Chapter Six.

Recruiting male students to participate in the study was another challenge. While it was not a problem to recruit both female and male employees as well as female students, I experienced difficulties encouraging male students to participate. To recruit more male students from any institution, I focussed primarily on courses in which men were the majority of those enrolled. I contacted the CPIT Trades Innovation Institute, the School of Building, as well as Electrical and Engineering Trades within CPIT and advertised for participation. However, this strategy was not fruitful. As this result was similar to my other attempts to recruit students at CPIT, I do not interpret it as an indicator for the OE as a gendered activity, but indicative of the OE as a potentially less common practice amongst Polytechnic students.<sup>20</sup> This will be taken up in the discussion in Chapter Six. I also contacted the Engineering and Law Societies at the University of Canterbury in attempts to recruit more male participants and e-mailed the pamphlet to students enrolled in these courses. Yet, these efforts were also unsuccessful and I did not recruit any more male students. My contact at the Engineering Society indicated that this may, in part, be due to their engagement in studies, exam preparations, and busy

---

<sup>20</sup> It is also possible that students are generally more likely to want to help someone from their own institution who is involved in a research project. Having more participants from the University of Canterbury may be a result of this study being conducted at this institution. Students at the University of Canterbury are also part of an environment where research is done to a greater extent than, for instance, at CPIT. This exposure to research may facilitate their participation in research projects.

schedules at that time of the academic year. In the end, I was only able to interview three male as opposed to six female students. While the number interviewed is too small to reach general conclusions, these interviews indicated no significant differences regarding expectations and aspirations between male and female students.

### *Conducting the interviews*

The interviews were conducted in a variety of places in Christchurch. When recruited through personal contacts, I invited the interviewees to my home or talked to them at their home. The interviews with students at the University of Canterbury that I had not met before were conducted in discussion rooms in the James Height Library on campus. This way, I could interview students before, after, or in-between lectures. One interview with a participant in paid work was conducted at his work place in town.

When interviewing participants, I used an interview schedule with semi-structured interview questions (See Appendix H). This offered the opportunity to set agendas for conversations while their direction was not pre-determined. My interest was in eliciting the interviewees' narratives about their plans for an OE and why they want to travel and work outside New Zealand. The flexibility created through the strategy I employed was supportive of this agenda, as I could ask additional questions and explore issues as the interviewees raised them. Thus, the focus of the interviews was different depending on the participants and their individual ideas about the OE.

The interviews I conducted were conversational. Usually, I initiated the talk through an opening question directed at the interviewees' OE plans. The thread of the conversations then developed according to the themes and issues they raised. As most interviewees were talkative and happy to share their views and OE plans, I did not have to actively lead the conversations through my questions. Some talked incessantly about their ideas, expectations, and plans, which showed their enthusiasm and passion related to the topic. Two interviewees, however, only briefly replied to the questions I asked, not initiating talk or discussion, but waiting for my next question.

Initially, I planned to include group interviews. I intended to talk to participants in a group rather than carrying out one-to-one interviews only if participants were, for

instance, approximately the same age, enrolled at the same or an equivalent tertiary education institute, or employed. However, during the course of this research, I only conducted one group interview, as during the research process, potential interviewees with similar backgrounds regarding age, education, or current employment contacted me at different times. As I wanted to conduct the interviews soon after the initial contact to prevent losing potential participants by waiting until I had recruited someone else with a similar background, I conducted one-to-one interviews as people agreed to participate.

The only group interview was with two participants, recruited through personal contacts. Both were men, currently employed, approximately the same age, and with the same educational background. They were also flatmates. I hoped that group interviews would offer different material that specifically arose from the situation of being interviewed with another person and hearing someone else respond to the questions. It was interesting to see the interviewees' reactions when they did not completely agree on their responses to particular questions. When disagreeing, they did not challenge or question one another, but accepted the other person's response, which might, in part, be due to the flexible features of the OE. Thus, the situation of interviewing people together provided some information about the acceptance of different personal aspirations with respect to the OE.

After having conducted the majority of interviews, I found that the same account was being repeated, which indicated that I might have reached what Bertaux (1981) refers to as 'saturation' regarding young adults' talk about their aspirations to do an OE. As the narratives the interviewees shared with me did not contain new information, I then focused on reaching a balance regarding the interviewees' background and gender rather than recruiting more people from the same institution or enrolled in similar courses. To achieve this, I used the strategies described above.

The research material collected during this process consists of 17 tape recordings, which became transcribed texts, and notes taken during the interviews. In the analysis of this material, I paid close attention to the way in which the interviewees talked about their personal aspirations and expectations associated with their OE. I was also attentive to

how discourses position young adults and how young adults, in turn, engage in the construction of both discourses and subject positions as they attribute meaning to different ways to live one's life. Being attentive to these features is reflective of the kind of discourse analysis I have undertaken.

## **The questionnaire**

To access a greater range of information about the research topic and include a wider variety of people, I distributed a short questionnaire (See Appendix I). This questionnaire was designed to examine personal reasons for or against OE travel as well as the perception of its representation in public media. It included general questions about the OE, its position in the New Zealand context, and respondents' personal reasons for going on an OE or why going away does not appeal to them. As opposed to the recruitment of interview participants, the sample of participants who completed the questionnaire included both young adults who were and were not planning to pursue an OE. Including both groups widened the range of participants and offered the opportunity to access a greater field of opinions on the OE.

The questionnaire mainly consisted of yes- and no- questions as well as some questions with given answers to choose from. I also included some space at the end to provide the opportunity to express thoughts and ideas about the OE that participants considered as being relevant, but that had not been questioned in the questionnaire.

In total, I distributed 50 questionnaires, again through personal networks and the snowballing technique. In some cases, I attached prepaid, self-addressed envelopes for the participants to return the questionnaire to me. While distributing the questionnaire through my personal contacts was successful and provided completed questionnaires as feedback, recruiting respondents through my interview participants was less effective. I only received four completed questionnaires through these contacts. The reason for this low response might have been that the interview participants contacted me as a response to my advertisement. They were interested in participating in an interview rather than recruiting more people for the study. Besides, their flatmates and friends might not have had the same interest in talking about the OE as the participants themselves. In total, 25

of the 50 initially distributed questionnaires returned and the content of these responses is included in the analysis.

### **The blog: web-based discussions**

While searching the net for information about the OE as part of my initial background research, I came across many websites or so-called blogs about the OE. These were personal web pages designed by young New Zealanders who were either currently on their OE or planning to go away within the next months. They used these websites as a medium to communicate about their OE's, to tell their stories and personal experiences either abroad or with respect to their preparation in New Zealand. Because of this, it appeared to me that the internet occupied a significant position with respect to the OE as a medium to keep in touch with people and to access information. To include the Internet as a research method in my fieldwork, I explored possibilities to set up my personal research blog to facilitate web-based discussions and conversations about the OE. My search for OE sites did not produce any link to any existing online chat-forum specifically for the OE. This meant that setting up an OE blog was not only a research strategy appropriate to explore my research topic but also an opportunity to initiate a discussion room about the OE where people could share their ideas. Unsure about how this strategy would proceed, I used the service offered by Blogger and set up an easy to use webpage. This provided another way of accessing information, as it facilitated online talk about the OE and the exchange of ideas through online discussions. This strategy also widened the range of participants beyond people currently in New Zealand.

As the blog administrator, I initiated online talk by posting statements about the OE. These statements were closely related to the research process, as I either summarised some of the generally taken for granted assumptions about the OE or comments made during the interviews. Often, I asked people for their opinion in response to some of the statements I posted. The following statements from the blog exemplify how I initiated talk and invited people to participate:

**Figure 1: Statements from the blog**

Monday, July 17, 2006

### OE in Australia?

I've done some interviews about the OE now and thought it was interesting, that some of the participants would not consider spending time in Australia as an OE. I probably would - Australia is 'overseas' from New Zealand. Is that not an 'overseas experience'? What do you think?

# posted by Anika @ 7:52 PM 16 comments 

Monday, July 31, 2006


### social support

When I interview people, I ask them about other people's reactions when they tell them about their OE plans. So far, all participants agreed that most people who are close to them (in particular their parents or siblings who have been on an OE before) are supportive and encouraging.

Those of you who have been or are overseas: Did you experience the same? If not, who was less encouraging and what were their arguments?

Those who want to go: What's your experience?

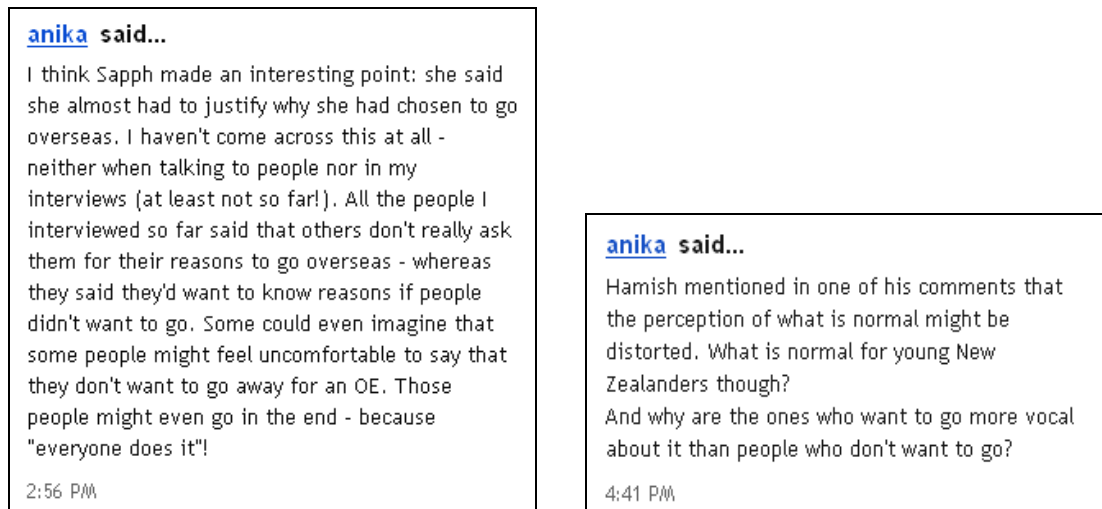
Or those of you who encourage others to go: Why do you support their plan?

# posted by Anika @ 1:19 PM 6 comments 

Source: <http://the-big-oe.blogspot.com>

I regularly posted statements on the blog to facilitate online talk about the OE and to challenge existing ideas. The blog users, called bloggers, then had the chance to either comment on my statements or other participants' comments. Through this, they interacted with each other. Sometimes, I encouraged more discussion by not only posting initial statements that started an online exchange, but also commenting on what bloggers had expressed and by asking additional questions. The following comments I made on the blog exemplify how I contributed to ongoing discussions:

**Figure 2: Comments made on the blog**



Source: <http://the-big-oe.blogspot.com>

To recruit people for participation in these online discussions, I employed various strategies. First, I set up the webpage in a way that anyone on the Internet could access the page and leave comments. Further, Blogger offers the possibility of a '*google blog search*', which can be used to search for blogs with specific topics. A search through this service directed at the OE or overseas work and travel produced the link to my research blog. Secondly, I used personal contacts and e-mailed the blog-link to people in my social networks in New Zealand. Once again using the snowball technique, some of them forwarded this link within their networks of friends. Through this, the blog link did not only spread within New Zealand but also to people currently on their OE in other countries. This was certainly the most efficient way to recruit participants for online discussions. Thirdly, I accessed some blogs designed by people who are currently travelling on their OE and left comments on these pages introducing my OE research and the possibility to participate online in this study. As I recognised some of those who participated in online discussions about the OE from these pages, I also consider this an efficient way to recruit participants.

In general, the web-based discussions on the blog became an efficient way to do research on the OE. This strategy allowed me to access information from a range of people. While some of the bloggers who participated indicated that they were, for

instance, working as a lawyer or had finished tertiary education, most did not indicate anything about their background or specify their qualifications. It is difficult therefore to say much about who participated in these discussions. However, since use of personal networks as well as links to existing blogs were a form of recruitment, it is likely that most participating bloggers were Pakeha university educated participants. As some of the comments were made anonymously and did not always indicate participation in discussions relating to other statements I made, I cannot specify the number of participating bloggers. In total, however, I posted eleven comments and received 73 responses from bloggers – some of them commenting regularly, others only once.<sup>21</sup>

### **Positioning of researcher – the outsider**

One of the primary challenges of this research was to conduct a study about the OE as a German social science student; a foreigner in New Zealand. This is an important perspective to consider, as how I was positioned had an impact on what I could learn about the OE. Being the foreigner meant that others did not see me as a participant in OE discourses in the same way as young New Zealanders. Researching the OE from this position involved certain advantages. This was especially obvious during the fieldwork component, the recruitment process, and most particularly during the interviews, where I was constantly reminded that I was not a New Zealander. As I occupied the position of an outsider, I was not informed about the OE and therefore someone who interviewees could inform and explain in more detail than they possibly would with a local who should know already.

As the OE is a general practice in New Zealand, almost every New Zealander knows about it – or at least assumes to do so. Therefore, it does not seem necessary to them to ask certain questions about this phenomenon. Some questions might not only seem unnecessary but also inappropriate for New Zealanders to ask due to what they are supposed to know about the OE. My position as an outsider allowed for apparently

---

<sup>21</sup> The participants' quotes used in the discussion in Chapters Five and Six come from either interviews or blog entries. In the presentation of the extracts, I will indicate either in the preceding paragraph or directly following the participants' pseudonym whether it was generated in interviews or online discussions.



simple and naïve questions and participants were willing to explain things to me they may not otherwise have done for a New Zealand researcher. This implied that the position of an outsider was to some extent an advantage when investigating the OE through face to face interviews.

I was also aware of and experienced disadvantages caused by my position as an outsider. While I did not experience any problems during the interview process, I was reminded of my special situation as a foreign student when recruiting participants at CPIT. When I identified myself as a student at the University of Canterbury and asked some CPIT students to participate in the study, their reactions indicated some tensions between University of Canterbury and CPIT students. They articulated that they were not planning to do an OE and explicitly distinguished themselves from university students by stressing their position as Polytechnic students. Some of their reactions implied that they were critical of the University of Canterbury and universities in general. I did therefore not only occupy the position of an outsider because I was from another country, but also because I was studying at a different institution. This clearly seemed a disadvantage when attempting to recruit participants at CPIT.

When approaching students at CPIT, I was also confronted with my position as an international student. The tensions I experienced in this context were mainly related to financial aspects, as some of the students said that they did not have the money to study overseas. By stressing the word '*we*' in a particular way and by underlining their lack of opportunities to study overseas, these students seemed to imply that I possessed the financial means to live and study in another country, whereas they did not see themselves in this position. For these particular students, the way in which they perceived me probably contributed to their refusal to participate in this study in any form. The analysis of these CPIT students' reactions is included in the discussion in Chapter Six.

These negative experiences played a minor though useful role in the research process. In general, people I approached did not consider me as an international student, but as an MA student conducting research on the OE. Due to this, they assumed that I had

acquired some information about the OE before approaching or speaking to them. Some participants even seemed to see me as an OE expert.

## **Methodological limitations**

As with any research strategy, there are limitations in the research strategies employed in this thesis. The first limitation relates to the qualitative features of the data collected. Qualitative fieldwork seldom generates precise statements about large populations. This is certainly true regarding this study, as the sample of participants is small compared to the total number of people embarking on their OE every year. Yet, qualitative research was still the best means to gather in-depth information about young adults' OE plans and their personal aspirations. Due to the small sample size and the qualitative character of the study, the findings made cannot be presented as representative for all New Zealanders or OE-travellers. However, they provide indicative information about the ways in which the construction of freedom to do an OE in New Zealand can be analysed as a form of governance through freedom.

Another issue that occurred during the research process was associated with the recruitment of participants. The difficulties in recruiting participants occurred predominantly at colleges of education and polytechnics. While my additional attempts to recruit students at institutions other than the University of Canterbury did not result in further participants, the difficulties I experienced told me something significant about the research topic, more specifically about differentiated access to the OE. Some people's reactions indicated that young New Zealanders may only have the freedom to do an OE if they have a specific qualification and come from a family background with parents who support them, personally and financially. Certain tertiary education institutions may also be sites for greater access to the opportunities to temporarily work and travel overseas as a young adult. The experiences I had while recruiting participants are therefore included in the analysis of the findings in Chapter Six. In this respect, it is also through the research process and problems I experienced while conducting the research that I learned things about the OE and the social context in which OE practices are pursued by some, but not all young adults.

## Conclusion

As indicated earlier, analysing the OE as a form of governance through freedom required a multifaceted research strategy. The overall research strategy involved a process of triangulation – I attempted to access information from a variety of sources to be able to identify and analyse what Nikolas Rose (1999: 49) has referred to as ruling and ‘independent authorities’ and ‘personal aspirations’ associated with OE discourses. The decisions regarding methodology and methods did provide alternative sources of information about the OE. The methods employed in this project allowed me to generate enough information to conduct an informed and critical preliminary account of the OE in New Zealand. The decision to conduct a qualitative analysis – assuming that this would provide the details required to explore my research agenda – led to an intensive investigation of a relatively small sample rather than an extensive survey. The qualitative methods employed provided the opportunity to gather complex and in-depth material related to all aspects necessary for an analysis of the OE as a form of governance through freedom. The information gathered enabled me to identify the various authorities and personal aspirations involved in OE discourses and to analyse their respective interests and desires, as well as the ways in which they shape the field of possibilities associated with OE travel. The outcome is an indicative analysis that contributes to an understanding of the way in which power and freedom are components of the OE.

In the next three chapters, I present the findings of my analysis of the research material gathered through the investigative component described in this chapter. In the following chapter, I focus on the analysis of background material such as visa regulations that govern opportunities to travel and work elsewhere, advertisements, travel brochures, and the web pages of non-governmental and non-profit organisations. Through this, I explore how governments, non-governmental organisations, and travel operators set up fields of possibilities associated with the OE. This analysis is followed by two chapters in which I investigate the discourses of young New Zealanders. In Chapter Five, I investigate how the range of possible actions available to young adults is shaped through key features and practices associated with the OE. Chapter Six focuses on capacities to pursue an OE and the subjectivity young adults hope to achieve through

temporarily living and working elsewhere. The analysis in both chapters predominantly draws on the material gathered through interviews and online discussions, whereas results from the questionnaires only occupy a minor position. They are used to reinforce results from interview conversations or blog entries and to make more generalised statements about young adults' aspirations. To protect the anonymity of both interviewees and bloggers, all their names have been changed.

## Chapter Four: Fields of possibilities

---

### Introduction

This thesis argues that governance through freedom occurs as young New Zealanders freely choose an OE as part of their life course. As outlined in Chapter Two, the practice of governance through freedom is achieved by generating alignments between what Rose (1999: 49) refers to as ‘political aims’, ‘independent authorities’ and ‘personal aspirations’. This chapter investigates the involvement and interests of various authorities – governments, non-governmental organisations, and commercial as well as non-commercial travel operators – relevant to the OE and analyses the freedoms they enable. In subsequent chapters, I explore young adults’ OE plans, their OE anticipations, and aspirations. This will be achieved through an investigation of written documents about overseas travel and the OE, as well as an analysis of interview material, questionnaires, and blog entries generated through the investigative component of this research.

In this chapter, I focus on ways in which ruling institutions and independent authorities shape the possibilities associated with OE travel available to young adults. This investigation consists of an analysis of written documents such as government regulations, press releases, OE guidebooks, travel advertisements, and other media representations related to the OE. Through an investigation of the formal regulatory framework of overseas work and travel, I illustrate ways in which the freedom to go away for an OE is constructed through bureaucratic practices and regulations that govern travel and work opportunities elsewhere.

A focus on the regulatory framework of overseas travel and the options non-government organisations construct shows that the freedom to pursue an OE is not unlimited, but, as Rose (1996a: 17) indicates, tied to ‘conditions that systematically limit the capacities of so many to shape their own destiny’. The analysis illustrates how the OE works in practice and, following Rose (1996a), how the range of possibilities that forms the

horizon of what is achievable is set up. Moreover, it illustrates that the field of possibilities associated with the OE is set up in order to achieve a certain New Zealand subject – the adventurous, resourceful OE traveller.

## **Authorities relevant to OE discourses**

Using Rose's approach to governance through freedom, I investigate ways in which various governments and non-governmental organisations are intertwined within discourses of freedom and examine their involvement in the construction and maintenance of OE discourses. In what follows, I first analyse what Rose (1999) refers to as ruling institutions pursuing political aims – in the context of the OE these are represented through various liberal democratic governments. To investigate how governments shape the range of possible actions associated with the OE, I analyse the regulatory frameworks that facilitate young adults' international movement and ensures their rights to paid work in other countries. I also analyse the involvement of a variety of 'independent authorities' (Rose 1999: 47) relevant to the OE such as commercial and non-commercial travel operators, tertiary education institutions, and the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association (RSA). These institutions shape the range of possible actions associated with the OE through different options they make available to young adults seeking to work and travel outside New Zealand.

Governments, commercial travel operators, and non-government or non-profit organisations reflect particular social imaginaries – ways in which they imagine their social existence and surroundings (Taylor 2004) and understand the world – that shape and are shaped by the options they make available to young New Zealanders in terms of OE travel.<sup>22</sup> Through regulations, advertising brochures, websites, political speeches, and images representing the OE and, more specifically, OE travellers, they actively construct certain subject positions associated with it. Through the ways they shape the

---

<sup>22</sup> In this thesis, the term imaginary is based on Charles Taylor's analysis. According to Taylor, social imaginaries are the ways in which people imagine their social existence as well as their social surroundings (Taylor 2004: 23). Taylor argues that these imaginaries are not only sets of ideals, but rather "what enables, through making sense of, the practices of a society." (Taylor 2004: 2)

fields of possibilities, they encourage young adults to take up these positions and develop a particular New Zealand subjectivity.

### **Ruling institutions and their political aims**

A young New Zealander's journey overseas for an extended working holiday is only possible because of current regulations regarding moving to, living and working in other countries. The regulatory framework that simultaneously facilitates and regulates young New Zealanders' mobility is set up by governments that establish the rules and regulations crucial for accomplishing any form of overseas travel. It is therefore useful to investigate the involvement of these authorities.

Actions the New Zealand Government takes in order to establish the regulations that enable their young citizens to travel to other countries are particularly interesting for this thesis. These actions are shaped by a social imaginary that stems from the colonial connection between New Zealand and the UK, which leads to bonds of history and culture between the two countries. Capie and McGhie (2005: 232) argue that this connection still exists and that there is a certain sense of closeness to the UK, which is still considered as the 'motherland' by many young New Zealanders. This view may also affect the OE as it typically or even traditionally involves travelling to the UK (Pearson 2005). For this reason, regulations of movement, residence, and work between the UK and New Zealand are specifically interesting in the context of the OE. Yet, travel agreements with other countries that facilitate young New Zealanders' temporary movement overseas are also significant.

In general, the social imaginary of liberal democratic governments that shapes their actions with respect to institutionalised regulations of movement is characterised by the backdrop of an increasingly globalised world. They imagine an interconnected world and a globalised economy in which people freely cross boundaries to live and work in foreign countries. This imaginary itself is shaped by processes of technological, communicative, and economic expansion and intensifications linked to globalisation (Held & McGrew 2004).

Narrowly defined, contemporary globalisation is merely seen as free markets and free flow of capital and labour in a liberal world. However, Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard (2004) indicate that this process involves more and does not only transform the economy, but virtually all aspects of modern life. Globalisation has been occurring for hundreds of years, but different parts of the world have become increasingly connected through technology, trade, and migration. As a result, local communities and realities are integrated in larger global networks due to more mobile goods, capital, and people. According to Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard (2004), as a result, national boundaries have lost some significance and citizens of different nation-states are increasingly connected. Yet, at the same time, nation-states become more important. People transcend boundaries, but also embrace and redefine them in particular ways to define their roots and belonging. Some authors argue that due to the effects of contemporary globalisation, it seems '(i)t is now more important than ever to define who 'we' are and how we are to live our lives' (Liu et al. 2005: 11). In New Zealand, ideas as to who one is and how to live one's life include, for instance, the development of a certain traveller-identity.

Suarez-Orozco (2004) argues that in order to participate in the global economy, people have to develop skills that are considered to be necessary in a global world. Against this backdrop, the OE can be interpreted as providing the opportunity for young New Zealanders to learn and develop skills necessary to live and actively participate in this world. Doing an OE offers them the opportunity to develop interpersonal skills and learn to interact with people from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. As a result, they may develop a multicultural understanding, which is particularly important in increasingly diverse societies, including New Zealand.

While citizens' movement has become easier in recent years, labour mobility has in some ways become more difficult (Bloom 2004). Differences regarding work conditions and unemployment rates between countries as well as increasing attempts to protect national barriers in order to prevent terrorism call for intensified forms of regulations of movement. Liberal democratic governments – most relevant in this thesis the New Zealand Government – have recognised this situation. They continuously work on the formal conditions of the constitutional right for their citizens to travel freely. Capie and



McGhie (2005: 230) argue that in this context, questions as to how a state thinks of itself and what kind of state it wants to be are relevant as 'it will try to act in a way that is consistent with that identity'. Accordingly, liberal governments have an interest in creating options of free movement for their citizens as this demonstrates an embodiment of liberal freedom. Enabling the free movement of citizens is opposed to more strictly regulated and limited opportunities to travel such as for people from communist societies as, for instance, North Korea or Cuba. Through their actions, liberal governments clearly want to distinguish themselves from these countries. If citizens take up the opportunities to travel that liberal governments create, it indicates that they have embodied liberal freedom as part of their identity.

The New Zealand Government has a special interest in creating travel opportunities for New Zealand citizens – in particular for young citizens. Considering the significant position of the OE in New Zealand, it is an important task for the New Zealand Government to enable young adults to pursue an OE and through this maintain this tradition (Capie & McGhie 2005). The Government is interested in facilitating young adults freely and legally travelling, living, and working in foreign countries as good New Zealanders who obey the law – as opposed to those who stay abroad and take up paid work illegally. Through facilitating the freedom to travel, they reinforce the image of the free citizen in a liberal world and aim to constitute New Zealand citizens as those who are good people participating in the global economy.

When considering living and working abroad, an important feature is the legal authorisation to do so. Depending on the particular country of origin and destination, those travelling are allowed to stay in foreign countries for a certain period on a tourist visa. This is generally limited to three months, but may vary between countries (Ministry of Tourism). As the name suggests, this visa only allows people to stay in another country as a tourist, a category which is clearly distinguished from the area of work (Hall & Page 2006). According to Hall and Page (2006), defined as a wider concept of leisure, tourism does not include work.<sup>23</sup> Such a view of tourism indicates

---

<sup>23</sup> Yet, Hall and Page (2006) indicate that some types of travel such as business travel are considered as a special work-orientated form of it.

that the New Zealand OE belongs to a special category, which is neither simply related to leisure and recreation nor to work and business.

While going overseas for an OE is not clearly defined as a particular way to travel and ideas about it differ, there seems to be some common understanding of what an OE generally involves – such as the combination of work and travel elsewhere. To accomplish this combination, young adults who have no ancestral links to the countries they visit have to hold special visas. In this context, governments' actions are particularly relevant as they set up the formal regulations that enable the OE as a working holiday. I have indicated earlier that the freedom to embark on an OE is constructed through and rests on these regulations. Currently, there are a variety of options that enable young New Zealanders to accomplish an OE – or, more broadly, to live and work outside New Zealand.

### **Over the ditch – living and working in Australia**

Broadly understood, doing an OE involves any form of living and working in another country, anywhere outside New Zealand. Thus perceived, going to Australia for a long-term stay qualifies as an OE. Yet, there seems to be some inconsistency in the way the OE is set up as an opportunity for freedom and the free choice of a destination for this journey. A widely defined understanding of the OE as any form of overseas work and travel does not always appear to correspond to the common sense of what an OE is. It seems that for many young adults, doing an OE involves travelling to Europe – or at least leaving Australasia. Although Australia does not seem to qualify as an OE destination for many young New Zealanders, living and working across the Tasman Sea is an option for them to spend some time elsewhere and is, therefore, relevant in the context of young adults leaving the country.<sup>24</sup>

Australia is New Zealand's closest geographic neighbour and often considered as its most important partner in economic, social, and cultural terms. The two countries have

---

<sup>24</sup> The reasons young adults articulated about Australia as not qualifying as an OE destination will be analysed in more detail in the discussion in Chapter Five.

an exceptionally close and co-operative relationship, which is shaped by migration, trade, and defence ties (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade). The close connection between the countries can be demonstrated by the high number of New Zealand and Australian citizens crossing the Tasman Sea every year for different reasons such as holidays, seeing family or friends, and business purposes. In this thesis, the number of New Zealand citizens travelling to Australia is of particular interest. According to Statistics New Zealand, this number has increased gradually over the last 20 years to approximately 941,000 in 2005. The Australian Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs even suggests that there were more than one million short-term arrivals of New Zealand citizens in Australia in 2003/04 for the purposes named above.<sup>25</sup>

Particularly interesting for this thesis is the number of long-term visitors and permanent residents who travel between New Zealand and Australia as the OE is officially considered to be a long-term movement if it exceeds the duration of a year.<sup>26</sup> The permanent movement of New Zealanders and Australians, however, seems to be one-sided. Bryant and Law (2004) estimated the number of New Zealand born citizens permanently living in Australia to be approximately 350,000 and thus, about eight times higher than the number of Australians living in New Zealand (Lunt et al 2006). According to statistics on outward travel, Australia is the main destination for New Zealand citizens for both long- and short-time movements. Interestingly, and contrary to other migrants' movements, there is no protest about this movement and economic migrations associated with it, and, as Stephen (2002) highlights, no media sensationalism or talk about potential terrorists and the spreading of diseases. This illustrates that the free flow between New Zealand and Australian citizens is highly accepted and tolerated by both nations.

Based on information gained from New Zealand departure cards, Statistics New Zealand provides a more detailed picture of New Zealand residents travelling to

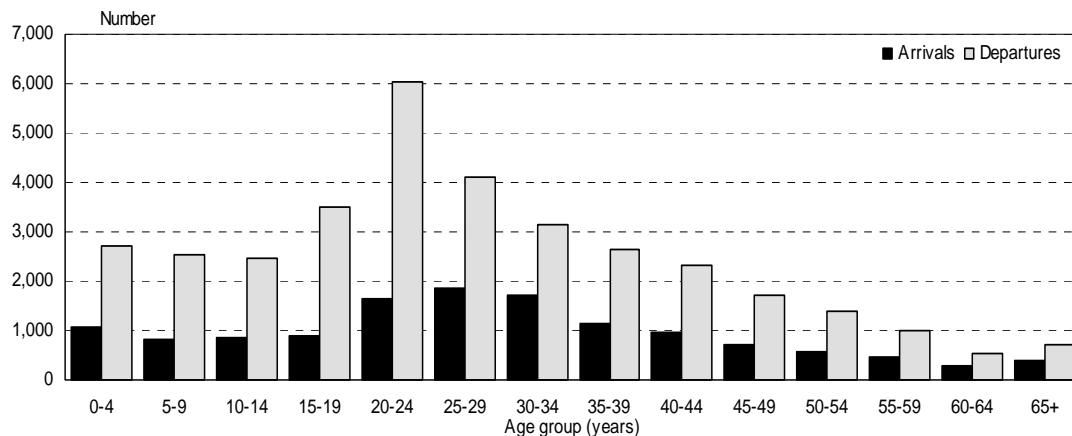
---

<sup>25</sup> The short-term arrivals of New Zealand citizens in Australia were totalled 1,099,183 in 2003/04 (Australian Government, Department of Immigration and Citizenship).

<sup>26</sup> In official statistics, permanent and long-term migrants include New Zealand residents intending to emigrate permanently or intending to be away for 12 months or more (Statistics New Zealand).

Australia and offers information on their age distribution as well as the length of stay. According to these statistics, the main group of New Zealanders travelling to Australia consists of people aged approximately 30 to 59. Yet, existing data indicates that this is not the main group of people moving to Australia for a long-term stay:

**Figure 3: Age of Permanent and Long-term Migrants to/ from Australia in 2005**



Source: Statistics New Zealand, Tourism and Migration 2005, [www.stats.govt.nz](http://www.stats.govt.nz)

This table shows that the group of people aged 20 to 29 constituted the highest proportion of permanent and long-term migrants from New Zealand to Australia in 2005 and accounted for almost one third of the 30,600 New Zealanders travelling to Australia for a long-term stay (Statistics New Zealand). Overall, these data indicate that higher age groups are more likely to travel to Australia for a short-term, whereas a higher proportion of young people leave for a longer period. There are various reasons for them to cross the Tasman Sea, such as better job prospects or possibly the idea to pursue an OE in Australia. Conversations with New Zealanders indicate that moving to Australia is often considered as the start of an OE – young adults have their first overseas experiences and move on from Australia for their real OE. The discussions of personal plans and aspirations in Chapter Five will clarify the reasons young adults have for travelling to Australia and where it fits in their overall OE plans.

The most important agreement that enables the movement of citizens between New Zealand and Australia is the Trans Tasman Travel Arrangement (TTTA), which consists of a series of bilateral and reciprocal agreements, initiatives, and understandings that

were established in 1973 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade a). These agreements allow both New Zealand and Australian citizens to travel freely between the two countries and to take up residence and paid employment in the each other's country without any restrictions. Both New Zealand and Australian passport holders – unlike citizens of any other country – are exempt from immigration requirements when entering the other country and issued with a special category visa, which also allows them to work in each other's country.

Through establishing the TTTA, the New Zealand and Australian Governments actively constructed the freedom for their citizens to move between the two countries. This freedom is only marginally restricted as New Zealanders and Australians are only free to travel to the other country, if they can present a valid passport upon arrival. The only exception to this free movement is that receiving the special category visa is subject to health or character considerations. People with specific behaviour or character concerns still have to apply for a visa to enter and stay in Australia or New Zealand, respectively, even though they have a valid passport. This restricted access indicates governments' intentions to avoid the immigration of people who may immediately need costly treatment and, thus, be a burden rather than a benefit to the system. This strategy evolved from national financial shortages, which led to difficulties in financing existing social systems. Overall, this shows that certain categories of people – in this case the healthy and the good – are more welcome and can therefore move more freely across certain boundaries in a globalised world than others.

For most people in New Zealand and Australia – the young in particular – these agreements result in a cross-national labour market, which is comparable to the situation within the European Union (EU). Due to certain regulations and principles within the EU, European citizens have the opportunity to move freely, reside, and take employment in any other member state. They are not limited by their national labour market, but can pursue their careers anywhere within the EU. Likewise, New Zealand and Australian citizens are not bound to their respective labour market, but have the opportunity to find work in the other country. Yet, the situation in New Zealand and Australia might facilitate the mobility of workers to a greater extent than the regulations

within the EU, as cultural and linguistic differences that are present in Europe are less significant in the New Zealand context.

The special agreements with Australia offer those New Zealanders who contemplate leaving the opportunity to live and work elsewhere. Due to these agreements, going to Australia is one of the most easily realisable options in terms of working and living offshore and accordingly, doing an OE in Australia may be easier than going elsewhere outside New Zealand. However, the discussion in Chapter Five will show that Australia was usually not considered as an OE destination by those who participated in this study. While it is considered as a place that offers greater economic opportunities and wider employment options, it does not offer the degree of difference in living conditions and lifestyle that is often associated with the OE. The agreements with Australia, in combination with the Australian economic situation, offer good opportunities particularly for those whose objective it is to earn and save money rather than travel and explore foreign countries. Yet, these are defined as some of the key features of the New Zealand OE.

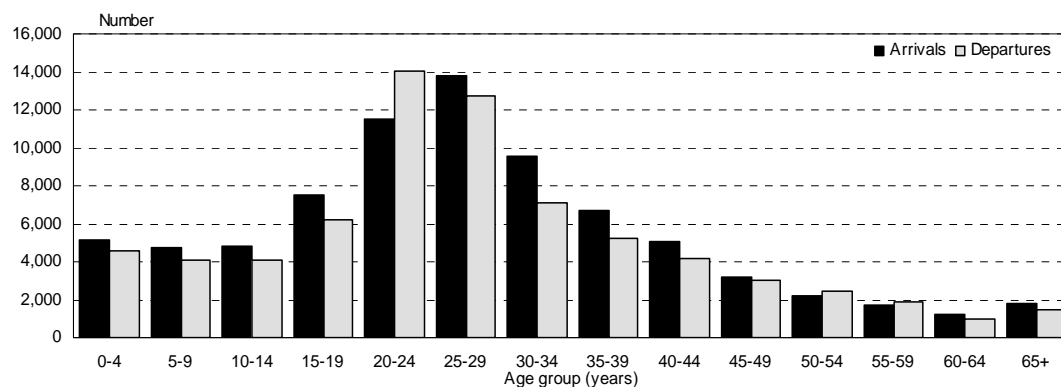
### **Working holiday agreements**

As indicated earlier, there are different options for young New Zealanders to gain legal authorisation to pursue an OE in countries other than Australia. The most common way to accomplish an OE is through working holiday visas, special agreements on immigration that enable young adults to combine travel and work abroad for a specified period.

According to the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, ‘(w)orking Holiday Schemes are reciprocal arrangements that allow people aged 18 to 30 years, who are not accompanied by children, to spend up to 12 months on holiday in the host country’. They continue: ‘working holidaymakers are able to undertake incidental employment during their visit to supplement their income and broaden their contact with people in the host country’ (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade). According to this definition, working holiday visas align with the idea of the traditional New Zealand

OE as a combination of work and travel. They offer young adults the opportunity to stay in the country issuing the visa for a long-term holiday and to legally take up paid work. As special agreements on temporary immigration, working holiday visas make a significant contribution to the construction of the freedom to pursue an OE, as some opportunities of going away only derive from these agreements. Thus, they can be considered as shaping the field of possibilities associated with the OE in very specific ways. Most of these agreements are reciprocal which is why they facilitate the exchange of young adults from participating countries.<sup>27</sup> In what follows, I investigate these agreements in more detail and illustrate their importance to the OE.

**Figure 4: Age of permanent and long-term migrants to/ from all countries**



Source: Statistics New Zealand, Tourism and Migration 2005, [www.stats.govt.nz](http://www.stats.govt.nz)

According to the table above, the main group of migrants to and from New Zealand intending to stay away for at least 12 months consists of people aged 20 to 29. This table does not only show those who leave and travel to New Zealand on a working holiday visa, but also includes people travelling on a different type of visa, such as a work or ancestry visa. Yet, to a certain extent, the mobility of this particular age group is due to the working holiday visa, its reciprocal character and age restriction.

Currently, the New Zealand Government has successfully negotiated and established working holiday agreements with 24 countries in Europe, America, and Asia. The

<sup>27</sup> Almost all working holiday agreements are reciprocal. The only exception is the agreement with the United States of America, which will be shown below. The existing agreement with the US enables young US citizens to spend a working holiday in New Zealand. However, due to strict Immigration laws in the States, young New Zealanders are not entitled to do so in the States.

following table shows the agreements presently in place and provides details regarding the validity of visas as well as possible work restrictions in different countries:

**Figure 5: New Zealand's working holiday agreements**

Country	Age Limit	Visa Validity	Work restrictions
Argentina	18 – 30	12 months	12 months; up to three months with one employer
Belgium	18 – 30	12 months	12 months
Canada	18 – 30	12 months	12 months
Chile	18 – 30	12 months	12 months; up to three months with one employer
Czech Republic	18 – 30	12 months	12 months, up to three months with one employer
Denmark	18 – 30	12 months	max. six months; up to three months with one employer
Finland	18 – 30	12 months	Max. nine months, up to three months with one employer
France	18 – 30	12 months	12 months
Germany	18 – 30	12 months	12 months
Hong Kong	18 – 30	12 months	Short-term employment only; up to three months with one employer
Ireland	18 - 30	12 months	Casual work; 12 months
Italy	18 – 30	12 months	max. six months; up to 3 months with one employer
Japan	18 – 30	Six months first; extension of six months possible	Temporary/ Casual <sup>28</sup>
Korea	18 – 30	12 months	Temporary; up to three months with one employer <sup>29</sup>
Malaysia	18 – 30	12 months	Temporary
Malta	18 – 30	12 months	Temporary
The Netherlands	18 – 30	12 months	12 months
Norway	18 – 30	12 months	12 months; up to three months with one employer

Source: STA Brochure *'Define your own OE'*<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> The New Zealand Embassy Tokyo indicates that 'the Japanese Working Holiday Visa specifically prohibits employment at bars, nightclubs, hostessing and host clubs, gambling establishments and other similar premises'. These conditions of possible employment – in particular the restriction on bar work, which represents a typical form of employment for young New Zealanders on their OE – distinguishes the Japanese working holiday agreement from most other agreements.

<sup>29</sup> Similar to Japan, the Korean Government set restrictions on the type of work that can be taken up by working holidaymakers. 'Working holiday visa holders may not engage in such jobs as entertainer or hostess. Nor may they engage in professional jobs like medical doctor, lawyer, professor or a business that goes against the tenor of agreement such as news coverage and report, religious activities, research or technical training' (Korea Working Holiday).



As the table shows, most working holiday agreements enable young adults to stay in another country for a period of up to one year. Yet, it also indicates the special character of the agreement with the UK as the visa they offer is valid for two years. The significant role of the UK as a particular OE destination will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Working holiday agreements enable young adults to combine a long-term holiday with work experience. They encourage travel, allow an insight into another country's culture and help to develop international connections as well as good relations through people-to-people links. Most working holiday agreements articulate the development of such international connections and intra-country bonds explicitly as their particular goal.<sup>31</sup> Further, through establishing working holiday agreements, governments aim to promote mutual understanding as well as cultural and educational exchange. Thus, working holiday agreements facilitate an exchange on cultural, social, and economic levels, which is predominantly done in the interest of internationalism. This is associated with the process of contemporary globalisation and the development of an increasingly interconnected world as the current backdrop of the OE. That governments establish these agreements – and negotiate new ones with more countries – illustrates their interest in offering citizens the opportunity to participate in the globalised world and, moreover, in preparing them adequately for their future. It particularly illustrates the way they set up international travel and work opportunities for their citizens in order to help them travel freely. This reinforces the embodiment of liberal freedom in a liberal society.

Applying for a working holiday visa is a common way for many young New Zealanders to pursue an OE for a very particular reason: these agreements significantly ease the process of gaining legal authorisation to live and work in a foreign country for an extended period. Through this visa, young adults can obtain some form of work permit

---

<sup>30</sup> This table has been taken from the STA brochure *'Define your own OE'* and was edited and supplemented with information found on the respective embassy websites.

<sup>31</sup> This is explicitly stated in, for instance, the agreements with Japan or Germany (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade b, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan a, German Embassy Wellington, New Zealand Embassy Tokyo).

without going through the more complicated immigration process and meeting the official requirements necessary to be granted a work visa such as a job offer upon arrival. Yet, as the New Zealand Ministry's definition underlines, employment should only be considered as incidental to the holiday and the main purpose must not be to find permanent employment. Consistent with the working holiday concept, which assumes that those on an OE will take up casual work to supplement travel funds while moving around, most of these visas only allow a limited time to work or restrict the time one can work for the same employer. The regulation of casual or temporary work does not only ensure the holiday character of the scheme, but also protects nationals of host countries from competition with working holidaymakers for long-term jobs, which is a specific interest pursued by governments.

The regulation of casual employment as part of the working holiday scheme is relevant when analysing how the freedom to go away for an OE is constructed through regulations. Whilst working holiday visas enable visits to another country, they simultaneously impose conditions on these visits and the sort of work that can be taken up. Young adults' opportunities to work in another country under this scheme also entail restrictions to their employment, as most working holiday agreements, for instance, are restricted to casual work. Sometimes, this may be the only form of work available for those who want to spend some time living and working elsewhere. This supports the assumption that the OE is a specific kind of freedom. Young adults travelling on an OE might have the aspiration to find employment within their field of education and possibly hope for the prospect of permanent employment. However, as they know about the restricted possibilities, they are prepared for a situation whereby their aspirations may not be fulfilled. In these respects, the expectations of both government and OE travellers seem to match. The analysis of personal OE aspirations, imaginaries and plans in Chapters Five and Six will show in more detail to what extent their expectations match and what those travelling overseas anticipate.

Through establishing these agreements, the governments involved – the New Zealand Government in particular – aim to achieve a certain subjectivity for their young citizens. They provide for them the opportunity to live as a freely moving person who embodies the core ideas of liberalism. Further, they enable young adults to travel, work and live

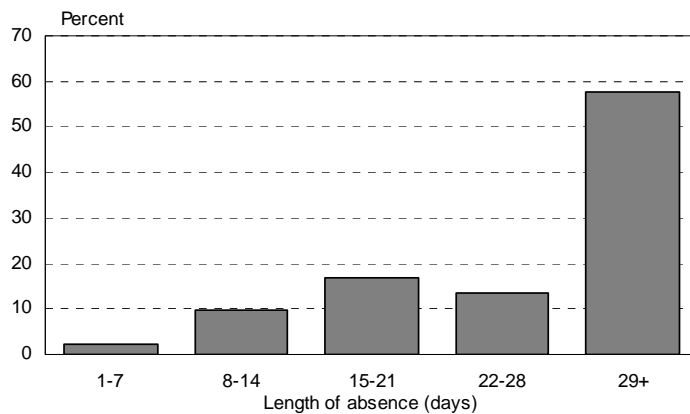
abroad as good people who act and behave according to the law instead of breaking it. Moreover, they create opportunities to work overseas, to possibly further careers, gain additional skills and, lastly, to earn money. Nevertheless, working holiday agreements have been established not only for the sake of opportunities for travellers. Their implementation also results from economic rationales. In these respects, the establishment of working holiday agreements is in part due to economic interests held by individual governments and the prospect of economic benefits for the host countries. Due to these economic rationales, young adults are only granted a working holiday visa if they can contribute to the host economy without making claims. The requirements applicants for this scheme have to meet seem to be only minor; however, they indicate that the working holiday scheme is an establishment for those who are considered to be less likely to make claims on a social security system while contributing to the economy. This is similar to the situation in New Zealand and Australia created through the TTTA.

Governments also establish working holiday agreements to attract young, healthy, and possibly skilled people in order to access casualised workers for specific periods. In these respects, working holidaymakers represent young workers who contribute to the workforce and fill temporary gaps in the economy that cannot be filled by local residents. This applies particularly to times when economies require additional labour resources due to seasonal demand. The working holiday scheme is therefore particularly beneficial for industries that rely on casual labour at peak times as the hospitality, horticulture, and agriculture industry. Furthermore, working holidaymakers are seen as spenders in the host economy, as they predominantly visit the host country as tourists, spending money travelling around. They are, thus, beneficial for the tourism industry and of special interest for the host economy. Economically driven interests in the OE and how certain authorities benefit from it will be highlighted in more detail in the discussion of various independent authorities later in this chapter.

## Exploring the motherland – an OE in the UK

As indicated earlier, the UK represents a typical or traditional destination for many young New Zealanders travelling on their OE. This aligns with the UK as a popular destination of choice for many New Zealanders in general. According to Statistics New Zealand, the UK ranked fourth behind Australia, Fiji, and the US regarding all New Zealand resident departures in 2005.<sup>32</sup> With respect to the length of absence, the majority of New Zealanders travelling to the UK (57.7%) spent more than 29 days away, whereas the majority of people travelling to the States only spent eight to 14 days abroad.

**Figure 6: Length of absence of travellers to the UK**



Source: Statistics New Zealand, Tourism and Migration 2005, [www.stats.govt.nz](http://www.stats.govt.nz)

The data on the length of absence of travellers to the UK indicates its character as a long-term rather than a short-term holiday destination. Accordingly, regarding permanent and long-term migration, the UK ranks second behind Australia.

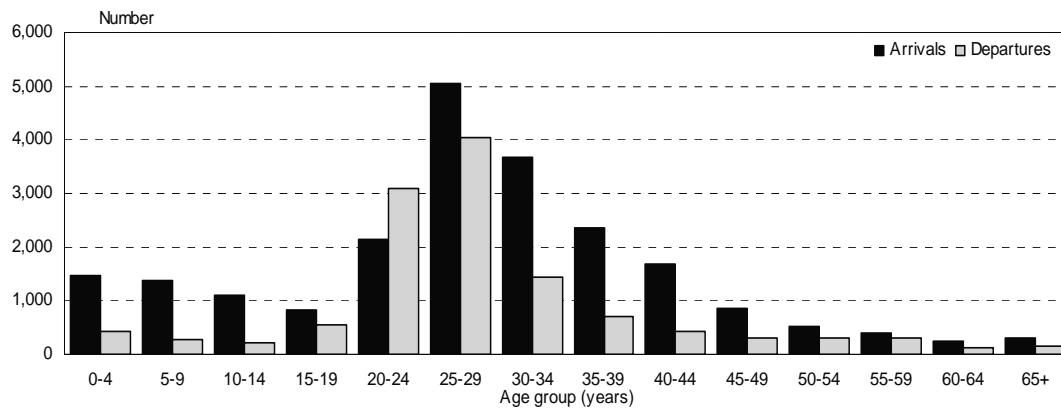
Details on the age distribution of permanent and long-term migrants to and from the UK reveal that the main group of New Zealanders travelling to the UK on a long-term basis is constituted by 20 to 29 year-olds. This may in part be due to New Zealand's working holiday agreement with the UK. Likewise and as a result of the reciprocal character of

---

<sup>32</sup> In 2005 New Zealand resident departures to Australia totalled about 941,000, departures to Fiji approximately 109,000, departures to the United States 90,000 and to the UK about 86,000 (Statistics New Zealand).

the working holiday scheme, this age group also represents the main source of British people coming to New Zealand intending to stay permanently or for a long-term, as the table below illustrates:

**Figure 7: Age of permanent and long-term migrants to/ from the UK**



Source: Statistics New Zealand, Tourism and Migration 2005, [www.stats.govt.nz](http://www.stats.govt.nz)

Consistent with the popularity of the UK as an OE destination, the British High Commission in Wellington issued more than 4,000 working holiday visas to young New Zealanders in 2005 (Berry 2006).<sup>33</sup> This is, however, only a small proportion of those travelling to and staying in the UK. It has been estimated that approximately 100,000 New Zealand nationals currently reside in London (Jemmet 2005) and the total number of New Zealanders living in the UK permanently is expected to be even higher. However, due to difficulties in detecting them, there is no exact figure of how many New Zealanders live in the UK.<sup>34</sup>

As indicated earlier, the importance of the UK as an OE destination may be a result of the colonial history between New Zealand and the UK. New Zealand researchers Myers and Inkson (2003: 51) conclude in their OE study that the focus of the OE on London is ‘caused by colonial history of New Zealand, OE traditions, the British working visa system, the cultural and language similarity of the two countries, and the natural

<sup>33</sup> Obtaining a visa for the UK is particularly attractive for young adults who want to spend more than one year abroad in the same country as it is valid for two years.

<sup>34</sup> This is related to the difficulties in estimating the New Zealand Diaspora that I have outlined earlier. Different estimates on the number of New Zealanders in the UK vary between 50,000 and 200,000 (Lunt et al 2006).

tendency of travellers not to change too many parameters of their lives all at once' (Myers & Inkson 2003: 51). Further, some may still consider the UK as a country that has to be explored to fully understand the New Zealand system. Besides, many New Zealanders have British – or at least European – ancestry due to this historical bond, which gives them different options of travelling to, living and working in the UK.<sup>35</sup>

The historical connection between New Zealand and the UK is the reason for their exceptional working holiday agreement, which is valid for two years as opposed to the usual 12 months. When negotiating this agreement, the New Zealand Government may have been driven by their awareness of New Zealand's colonial history and a view of the UK as blighty – the home and 'motherland' (Capie & McGhie 2005: 232). The possibility to travel to and spend time in the UK offers young adults the opportunity to get to know this country and develop their own awareness of these historical connections. However, the history of the working holiday agreements with the UK illustrates that this special historical connection was not the only reason for their establishment.

Changes in the agreement with the UK that have been made over the years illustrate the economic rationales relevant to the implementation of working holiday schemes. For a while, working holidaymakers in the UK were not supposed to work in their area of training or expertise (New Zealand High Commission London). This restriction was made in order to reduce competition between working holidaymakers and nationals with similar skills. Hutchinson and Owens (2003) indicate that there were, however, no means of effectively policing these restrictions, which is why many young workers as well as British employers have ignored them. This practise was legalised by changes made in 2003, as from then on, working holidaymakers in the UK were only marginally restricted in what they could do. They were allowed to take up employment for the complete period of the two-year stay and, moreover, to switch from the working holiday scheme to permanent and work permit employment after a year – provided they could meet the requirements for a work permit. These changes were made when

---

<sup>35</sup> In 2003, the British Home Office reported 'that about 400,000 New Zealanders had British passports and in 2004, a majority of New Zealanders had partiality (a UK parent or grandparent) and could live and work there for four years and then apply for citizenship' (Lunt et al 2006: 15).

unemployment in the UK was low, employment had risen to record highs, and the British Government had to face labour shortages in certain sectors. To tackle this problem, they expanded their migrant programme and changed the working holiday scheme as mentioned above to facilitate temporary labour migration – in particular of the young and skilled. The restriction regarding working in the area of education or training was removed in order to benefit from potentially marketable skills that young travellers brought into the country. This was one of the measures taken by the British Government in order to improve skills throughout the UK and to build what they considered to be a Britain of economic strength. In this respect, the governments' desires align with those of independent authorities, namely companies involved in the British economy. As skills are considered as essential to productivity and, thus, economic growth, both the British Government as well as companies have a special interest in the movement of young, skilled workers.

Economic interests were again reason to change the working holiday scheme conditions back to some of the former restrictions. Easing sector-specific and temporary labour shortages remained an important objective of working holiday agreements. Yet, the British Government reversed the rules in order 'to stop young people "abusing" the working holiday privileges by arriving in Britain and taking-up full-time employment and depriving young Britons of jobs' (Carter 2005). The main changes concerned the length of time that young adults are allowed to take up paid work, which is now 12 months during the two-year stay in the UK. Furthermore, restrictions on switching from the working holidaymaker category to another scheme and into permanent employment were put back in place. What remained was the extension of the former age limit from 27 to 30, which stems from a general extension of the period of youth or adolescence. Due to different developments such as longer periods of education and training, the age limits of this period have been repeatedly extended during the last decades. Governments include this development in their considerations by keeping the age limit of 30 in the working holiday agreements.

For many young New Zealanders, the working holiday scheme is not the only way to gain legal authorisation to live and work in the UK. Some New Zealand born young adults have British passports as a result of having one or more parents with British

Citizenship; others can access the UK on an ancestry visa or an Entitlement of Right of Abode. These visas derive from what is considered as strong ancestral ties and offer young adults the opportunity to live and work in the UK.<sup>36</sup> While the Entitlement of Right of Abode enables them to live and work in the UK indefinitely without restrictions, the ancestry visa is initially limited to a five-year period, followed by the prospect of permanent residence or citizenship (British high Commission New Zealand). However, to obtain the right to stay permanently, young adults must actively seek employment and prove that they have worked continuously in the UK for four years (UK Home Office). Like the working holiday visa, the ancestry visa is only granted to those who will contribute to the UK through their work and taxes, but not make demands on the state until they are granted citizenship.

This section offered an overview of the ruling institutions relevant to the discursive field of the OE and illustrates how formal regulations define and shape the field of possibilities associated with OE travel. To further illustrate that OE practices produce a form of governance through freedom, it is necessary to analyse the involvement of non-state organisations, and commercial and non-commercial travel operators.

## **Independent Authorities**

There are various institutions Rose (1999: 49) would refer to as ‘independent authorities’ that articulate and are involved in OE discourses. Their interest in the OE and actions they take to shape the field of possible actions derive from their different social locations. In this section, I look at some of these key actors in more detail and analyse the ways in which they shape young New Zealanders’ opportunities to pursue an OE. As part of this investigation, I analyse the interests, aims and social imaginaries that underpin their actions.

First, I identify the tourism industry as a relevant authority, as the OE is a travel activity closely related to this industry. I investigate ways in which commercial as well as non-

---

<sup>36</sup> These strong ancestral ties refer to a grandparent born in the UK for the Ancestry Visa or a parent born in the UK for the Right of Abode.



profit operators associated with the tourism industry assist young adults in pursuing their OE. Secondly, as New Zealand education institutions occupy an important position with respect to international exchange, I investigate how these institutions shape and constitute opportunities for young adults to temporarily live outside New Zealand. Lastly, I discuss the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association (RSA) as an organisation that shapes and uses OE discourses in very particular ways and, through this, creates specific meanings associated with the OE in New Zealand.

When analysing the involvement of these organisations and institutions, I cannot identify a common social imaginary that is consistent with each group. Further, due to the different roles they occupy with respect to overseas work and travel, their capacities for actions and thus, the ways in which they shape the field of possibilities associated with the OE differ greatly. It therefore seems useful for the analysis to look at each of these authorities separately and work out their respective social imaginaries as well as interests and the constitution of subject positions.

### **The tourism industry & OE packages**

The New Zealand OE represents a special form of tourism that involves travel itineraries, flight tickets, and sometimes also holiday packages. Accordingly, the tourism industry can be considered as an independent authority relevant to the OE, represented in the form of different travel operators – travel agencies in general and, more specifically, commercial as well as non-profit organisations specifically set up to offer young adults assistance in organising their journey overseas. In what follows, I investigate the ways in which these various travel operators shape young adults' opportunities to temporarily live, work, and travel outside New Zealand.

When making options of overseas travel available to young adults, the tourism industry is generally driven by the imaginary of the world as a field of diverse travel experiences. Driven by this imaginary, commercial travel operators seek to offer young New Zealanders opportunities to experience this world, its different countries and cultures – and become well-travelled, cosmopolitan people. These attributes characterise the

subjectivity that operators associated with the tourism industry construct and desire for young New Zealanders.

The understanding of the world as a travel opportunity is presented, represented and reinforced through the media advertisement of travel and tourism operators that offer packages, programmes and assistance for young New Zealanders planning to pursue an OE. I exemplify the way in which this imaginary is represented by analysing how the organisation International Exchange Program (IEP) sets up the travel brochure '*working adventures worldwide 2005*' (IEP) in which they offer various programmes for young adults to travel and work elsewhere.

IEP is a non-profit organisation specialising in sending young New Zealanders overseas on working holidays or, as they refer to it, on 'working adventures worldwide' (IEP 2005). They are part of a global network of organisations that continuously seek opportunities for young adults to work and travel all over the globe. This intention and the non-profit character of the organisation reflects the underlying social imaginary of the tourism industry.

In the context of the New Zealand OE, IEP not only reflects the tourism industry's general social imaginary of the world as a field of travel opportunities, but seems to specify this imaginary as the world in people's hands. In the brochure '*working adventures worldwide 2005*', IEP uses the image

**Figure 8: IEP advertisement image**



Source: IEP homepage: [www.iep.co.nz](http://www.iep.co.nz)

of a person holding a model of the world (see image above) to convey this message. Through using this image in their advertisements for young adults' travel programmes, they indicate the freedom young adults have when they plan their personal working adventure – virtually anywhere in the world. The message they install indicates that young adults can freely choose what they want to do during their OE. According to their

representation, it seems there are no restrictions as the world is in people's hands – all the more so with IEP's help and assistance.

Currently, IEP offers working holiday programmes in Britain, Canada, Costa Rica, France, Ireland, and the USA. They offer young New Zealanders the opportunity to participate in a variety of programmes in these countries, such as 'Work USA', 'Summer Camp USA', 'Volunteer Costa Rica', 'Work France', 'Work Britain', or 'Work Ireland' (IEP 2005). According to their advertisements, IEP offers advice and assistance before leaving home, organises information meetings, travel insurances, discounted flights, and applications for the appropriate visas. Furthermore, they offer assistance while working and travelling abroad. All their programmes begin, for instance, with an orientation meeting in the respective country to introduce the travellers to their new environment. Further, they assist the working holiday maker in finding temporary employment, as they either arrange job placements and volunteering positions or offer access to job listings. This can be interpreted as offering young adults some sense of security when leaving their home. For some young adults who are planning to temporarily live and work in another country this opportunity for both freedom and security might be crucial for choosing to pursue their OE with an organisation such as IEP.

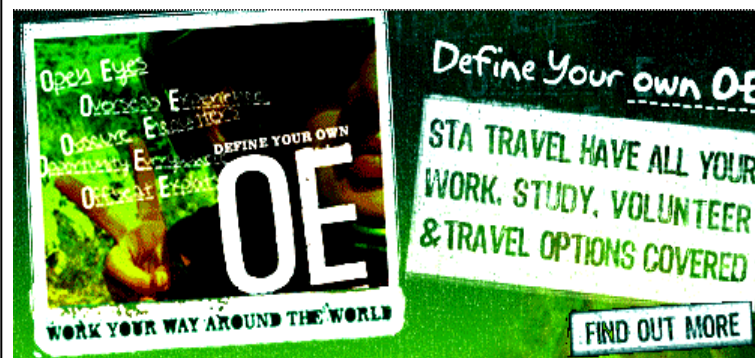
Eligibility for most of IEP's programmes is consistent with the requirements for working holiday visas as outlined above, in particular regarding the age restriction, as most of IEP's programmes depend on the working holiday visa for participants. Thus, programmes offered by IEP can be interpreted as working holidays where visas are arranged for the travellers. The authorisation to temporarily live and work in these countries could also be arranged without IEP's assistance. The exceptions are the opportunity to temporarily live and work in Costa Rica and the US. As indicated earlier, New Zealand does not have a reciprocal working holiday agreement with the United States and thus, many young New Zealanders only have the opportunity to pursue an OE in the US by participating in such programmes. Thus, IEP and similar operators offering young adults the opportunity to temporarily work in the USA actively create options for possible actions and extend the field of possibilities constituted through working holiday agreements.

A commercial travel operator relevant in the context of the New Zealand OE is STA, a worldwide travel agency that specialises in student and young adults' travel. They assist young adults who want to pursue any kind of travel through offering travel packages, organised tours, discounted airfares, or student travel insurances. Through offering services at relatively low cost, STA specifically enables young adults to experience the travel opportunities the world offers.

In New Zealand, the STA campaign '*Define your own OE*' was specifically designed to promote the OE as a travel activity undertaken by young adults. Through this campaign,

STA specifies the general social imaginary of the world as a field of travel opportunities similar to IEP, as the title strongly aligns with the idea of the world in people's hands. Yet, while this understanding

**Figure 9: STA campaign '*Define your own OE*'**



Source: STA homepage, [www.sta.co.nz](http://www.sta.co.nz)

is only implied through images, but left unspoken by IEP, STA articulates the possibility for young adults to define their OE according to their own wishes and desires – without indicating any restrictions. This advertisement potentially shapes the discursive field of the OE and the ways in which young New Zealanders think about their OE.

Through the illustrations as well as the language that STA uses in the brochure, they clearly ascribe a certain meaning to the OE and create a specific image of it. They use, for instance, the abbreviation OE to generate various terms such as 'Open Eyes', 'Obscure Encounters', or

**Figure 10: STA advertisement 2**



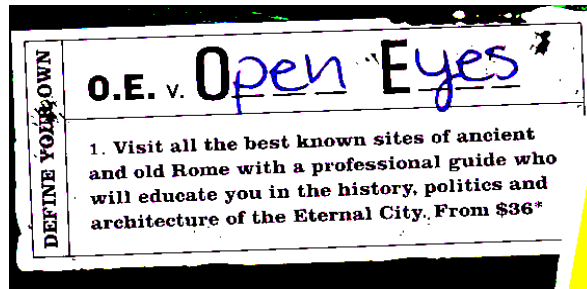
Source: STA brochure '*Define your own OE*'

'Opportunities Everywhere' and give brief descriptions of what young travellers can do

as part of their OE. At the same time, they indicate how this can be achieved through services they offer.

Through their representations, STA constructs particular subject positions for those

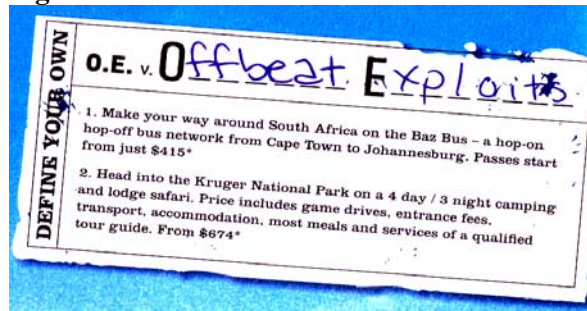
Figure 12: STA advertisement 1



Source: STA brochure 'Define your own OE'

travelling on an OE. According to them, adventurous people who face 'obscure encounters' and are interested in 'offbeat exploits' 'define their own OE'. Yet, those who are not quite as adventurous can pursue an OE in an organised way, which is when OE travellers become particularly interesting for STA. To achieve the personal experience that each individual aspires to, STA offers assistance with everything young adults need to 'get going' (STA). The way in which they portray young adults travelling on their OE defines the OE clientele or at least attributes certain characteristics to OE travellers.

Figure 11: STA advertisement 3



Source: STA brochure 'Define your own OE'

Travel operators such as STA and IEP portray the OE as the 'dream years without worries', 'amazing opportunities', and 'incredible years'.<sup>37</sup> Ways in which they articulate and set up OE discourses without indicating restrictions to the personal definition of an OE generate the association of the OE with a range of unlimited possibilities. This is the OE image that many young New Zealanders are exposed to through media representations. In Chapters Five and Six, I will explore how these images relate to the aspirations of the young adults who participated in this study.

<sup>37</sup> All these quotes have been taken from IEP's brochure 'working adventures worldwide 2005'.

This discussion illustrated that travel operators shape the field of possibilities associated with the OE in precise ways. Their assistance varies from arranging essentials such as flight tickets, visas, overseas bank accounts, or insurances to precise travel and work programmes. The specific programmes to pursue an OE in the form of organised trips and work recruitments seem to be particularly useful for those who plan to work and travel in countries where conditions to organise an OE are more difficult in terms of visas or jobs. Without these programmes, young adults would not have the same opportunities to spend time working and travelling in some countries such as the US.<sup>38</sup> This shows that commercial and non-profit travel operators clearly widen the range of possibilities for young New Zealanders to choose what to do during an OE. Furthermore, they offer opportunities to experience an OE while being exposed to a limited risk.

Travel operators construct a subjectivity for young New Zealanders that is characterised by attributes such as adventurous and cosmopolitan. Through their programmes, they offer them the chance to achieve this subjectivity and, as advertised, to develop self-reliance, 'confidence, maturity, resourcefulness and responsibility' (IEP). They support young New Zealanders in developing these characteristics in order to achieve their ultimate goal, which is to 'empower' (IEP) them.

Similar to the ruling institutions that are relevant to the discursive field of the OE, most commercial operators not only aim to empower young New Zealanders and support them in developing a particular subjectivity; depending on the operator, they are also interested in making profit, promoting internationalism, and international exchange. This aligns itself with the goals that governments have and, further, the processes of globalisation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

---

<sup>38</sup> As indicated earlier, the US does not have a reciprocal working holiday agreement with New Zealand. Further, the US Immigration system makes it hard to obtain a work permit and to realise a long-term stay in the States.

## New Zealand education institutions

Tertiary education institutions in New Zealand provide another example of what Rose (1999: 49) has referred to as ‘independent authorities’ in the context of the New Zealand OE. With respect to education institutions, I concentrate on universities, as the OE seems to be a travel activity predominantly undertaken by university students or graduates. This particular focus of the OE has been published in a previous study conducted by Myers and Inkson (2003). Their research suggests that the OE is ‘primarily undertaken by educated people’ (Myers & Inkson 2003: 46), as the majority of participants they could recruit were either university graduates or had some tertiary education experience.<sup>39</sup>

Universities are predominantly concerned with knowledge and its production. Consequently, their social imaginary associated with international movement and overseas travel focuses on global knowledge and the ways it is generated. Universities appear to be particularly interested in international exchange, in enabling their students to participate in global knowledge discussions. This interest shapes the subjectivity they aspire to for their students – a well-educated, internationally orientated person who engages in the generation of global knowledge. To achieve this, they offer students opportunities to have international experiences on an academic level through study abroad or student exchange programmes with specific partner universities around the world.

The University of Auckland, for instance, established the programme 360° Auckland Abroad to facilitate student exchange between their University of Auckland and ‘115 exchange partners throughout the

**Figure 13: University of Auckland Exchange Programme**



Source: University of Auckland, [www.auckland.ac.nz](http://www.auckland.ac.nz)

<sup>39</sup> In Chapter Six, I will discuss experiences I had trying to recruit students at tertiary education institutions other than university. These experiences are consistent with Myer and Inkson’s research and lead to certain assumptions about young adult’s capacities to do an OE.

world' (University of Auckland). As with most exchange programmes, participating in this program offers University of Auckland students the opportunity to study abroad while earning credits for their University of Auckland degree. Similarly, the University of Canterbury has partner universities in various countries in Asia, Europe, North America, and Australia (University of Canterbury). For many exchange programmes, the participating universities have negotiated tuition reciprocity, allowing students to attend the partner institution under the same cost and financial aid terms as at home.<sup>40</sup>

With respect to study worldwide programmes, universities advertise the possibility to study in an international environment as a great chance and emphasize the advantages gained by studying parts of a degree overseas. The International Office at the University of Auckland, for instance, promotes their exchange program as a chance 'not to be missed' as it offers young adults the opportunity to 'immerse in another culture', 'to experience another learning environment', and 'to gain international experience (University of Auckland). They particularly underline the opportunity to develop skills important for people's future careers, increase their marketability, and develop professional networks on a global level. This aligns itself with the subjectivity universities generally desire for young adults – well-educated and highly skilled graduates who have work opportunities worldwide.

The participating students for exchange programmes are interviewed and selected by the universities. The International Office at the University of Canterbury specifies the eligibility for their exchange program and states that they are 'looking for applicants who will be good ambassadors of the university' (University of Canterbury). Massey University articulates a similar idea of sending ambassadors and underlines the significant role of these students for 'international communication and understanding' (Massey University). The intention to send ambassadors who represent the university in another country reflects a particular interest universities have in exchange programmes: through facilitating international exchange, they get better known abroad and, moreover, gain a specific reputation. The students they send as ambassadors play a key

---

<sup>40</sup> Tuition reciprocity exists, for instance, for the exchange programme between the School of Law at the University of Canterbury and the College of Law at the University of Cincinnati (University of Cincinnati).



role regarding their reputation abroad and might advertise the university as a place to study.

Along with the International Office, the universities' careers advisors provide information on students and graduates' opportunities to spend some time outside New Zealand. UC Careers and Employment at the University of Canterbury, for instance, specifically provides information on programmes to work worldwide such as those offered by IEP. They also offer information on various teaching programmes in Asian countries such as the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET), run by the Japanese Government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan b). These programmes offer native English speakers the opportunity to teach English in Asia. Often, the only requirement besides being a native speaker is holding a university degree in any discipline, which is why such options are promoted through universities. Other careers advisories such as the Employment and Industry Liaison Unit at Lincoln University also distribute special information on the OE such as the announcement of the so-called 'Big OE Evening' (Appendix J) held by the British High Commission.<sup>41</sup> Through distributing this information, they demonstrate their awareness of the importance of the OE for young adults and further knowledge about it. They also show that they are concerned with international work opportunities for students and graduates and demonstrate their intention to inform them about ways to accomplish these.

This discussion has illustrated some ways in which New Zealand universities shape the field of possibilities associated with young adults' – and in particular students' – travel opportunities. Through their programmes, universities actively construct options of pursuing an OE for university students; however, they only facilitate forms of an OE that involve overseas education.

---

<sup>41</sup> The Employment and Industry Liaison Unit at Lincoln University distributed the announcement of the 'Big OE evenings' through e-mails. I was informed about this by an interviewee from Lincoln University.

## **The Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association**

The Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association (RSA) is also an 'independent authority' (Rose 1999: 49) relevant to the context of the New Zealand OE. They do not directly shape the range of possible actions available to young adults as do other independent or ruling authorities; they do not actively create travel or exchange opportunities, nor do they offer specific OE packages. Yet, they shape the discursive field associated with the OE through attributing a particularly powerful meaning to it.

The RSA is shaped by the social imaginary of the ANZAC warrior, New Zealand and Australian soldiers fighting in the world wars as part of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) (RSA a, McGibbon 2000). This imaginary does not only shape the association's character, but also their actions, which are focused on the remembrance of the ANZAC experience. The RSA aims to raise awareness about the involvement of New Zealanders in the world wars, in particular the landing of Allied soldiers on the shores of Gallipoli/ Turkey in the First World War. Each year, New Zealand commemorates the anniversary of this event on ANZAC Day, April 25<sup>th</sup>. In these commemorations, the RSA promotes acknowledgement and remembrance, honouring those who participated and died in Turkey.

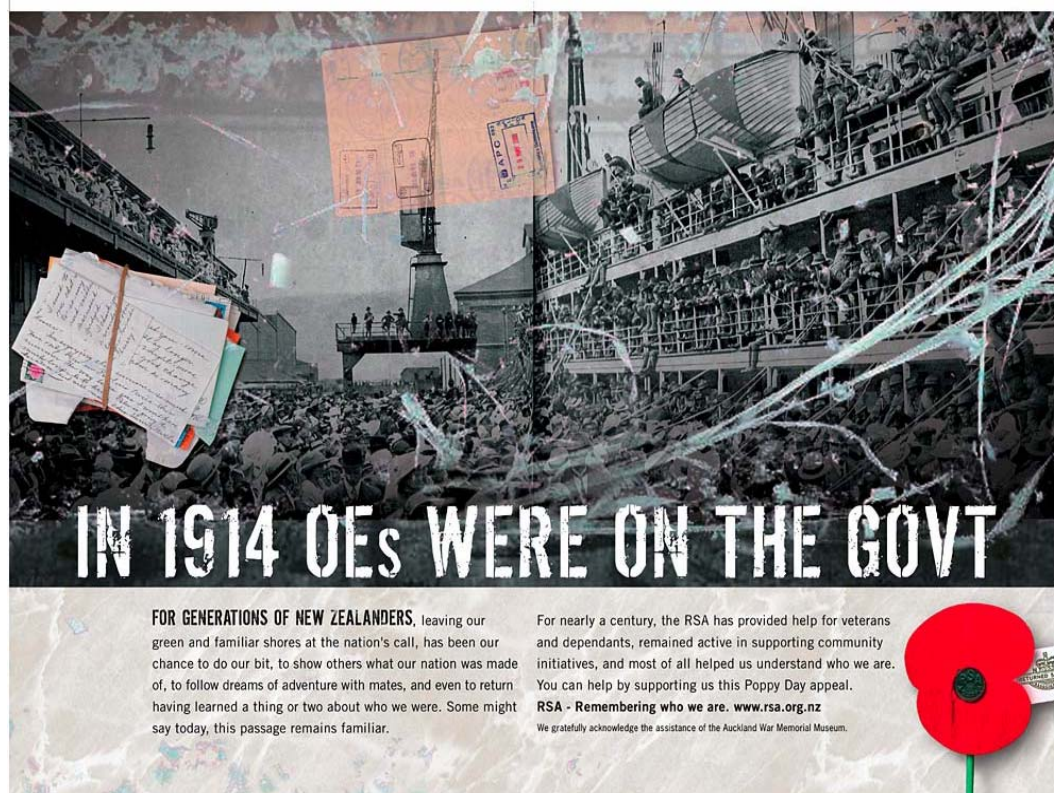
In contemporary New Zealand, ANZAC Day has become a day to commemorate New Zealanders' involvement in the war and, as McGibbon (2000: 30) suggests 'to celebrate values that many New Zealanders consider either distinctive or admirable about their nation – (such as) mateship, unity, courage, self-sacrifice, loyalty'. New Zealanders recognise ANZAC Day as a special marker of their nationhood and seem to be keen to celebrate their unique identity (Ministry of Culture and Heritage). This is evident through the growing importance and the rising popularity of ANZAC Day with people of every age group in New Zealand.

Through representations of the war and the services they offer, the RSA aims to construct a particular New Zealand subjectivity, which is characterised by an awareness of the war history and an acknowledgement of the characteristics that define New Zealand as a nation. They aim to constitute New Zealand subjects who are aware of

what happened, who commemorate those who died in service of New Zealand, and who honour returned servicemen and –women (RSA a). Further, they want to constitute New Zealand subjects who are conscious of their belonging and identify themselves as part of the nation. One way for them to achieve this is through running remembrance campaigns and offering ANZAC Day commemoration services.

As part of their ANZAC remembrance campaign, the RSA generates a special link between the historic travel itinerary of young New Zealanders with its specific purpose to fight in the war and the contemporary OE.

**Figure 14: RSA ANZAC remembrance campaign**



Source: Website of the Royal New Zealand Returned Services' Association, [www.rsa.org.nz](http://www.rsa.org.nz)

The image above, used in the RSA campaign, utilizes the contemporary working holiday phenomenon to interpret young New Zealanders' journey overseas to serve in the war retrospectively as an OE. This shapes the meanings of the OE in very particular ways. Through connecting the OE to ANZAC Day and New Zealand's involvement in

the war, the RSA sets up the OE as an important feature of the New Zealand history and, with it, attributes a particular importance to this phenomenon. The caption indicates that the history of the OE in New Zealand dates back to the First World War and identifies the journey overseas during the war as a way to learn about oneself and one's nation – a chance to learn 'a thing or two about who we were' (RSA c). The RSA interprets the historic journey as a 'way to follow dreams of adventure with mates' and clearly generates the connection to the contemporary OE through declaring that 'today, this passage remains familiar' (RSA c) – namely in the form of the OE. The comparison between the OE and the participation in the war indicates that the OE is accepted and acknowledged as part contemporary New Zealand life courses. Through generating the link between serving in the war and the OE, the RSA campaign specifically addresses young New Zealanders who know about the OE as a modern travel phenomenon.

To promote remembrance and raise awareness, the RSA cooperates with other organisations and arranges ANZAC Day commemoration services and ceremonies throughout New Zealand as well as overseas, for instance, at Gallipoli. Offering and organising these services can be interpreted as a direct inscription on the fields of possibilities associated with OE travel, as it offers options of what to do overseas. The RSA advertises these services on their website and provide a 'guide for New Zealanders to ANZAC Day 2007 in New Zealand and around the world' (RSA b). This guide provides information about services, special events and exhibitions around ANZAC Day in New Zealand and overseas.

McGibbon (2000: 30) states that the ANZAC service held at Gallipoli attracts immense interest and 'many New Zealanders have made the 'pilgrimage' to Gallipoli for Anzac Day' not only to commemorate, but also celebrate New Zealand's national identity. According to an estimate, approximately 20,000 people attended the Anzac Day commemorations at Gallipoli in 2005 (Ministry of Culture and Heritage). A certain proportion of these people are young New Zealanders who travel to Gallipoli and attend the ceremonies during their OE. They take this opportunity to create a very specific overseas experience, which gives them the chance to develop the subjectivity the RSA articulates for young New Zealanders with connections to an ANZAC past. Through

including a visit to ANZAC Cove in their OE travel itinerary, young adults can assert their connection to New Zealand.

### **Alignment among various authorities**

This chapter has illustrated how governments, non-government organisations, commercial and non-profit travel operators shape the range of possible actions available to young adults as well as the meanings associated with the OE. Through the actions they take in order to facilitate OE travel, they hope to contribute to the production of specific kinds of New Zealand subjects.

The New Zealand Government, for instance, seeks to constitute New Zealanders who travel freely and demonstrate an embodiment of liberal freedom. They also hope to construct good New Zealand citizens who cross boundaries as legal travellers. In some respects, these desires overlap with the subjectivity that independent authorities anticipate as a result of young adults pursuing an OE. The tourism industry, for instance, anticipates well-travelled and cosmopolitan people. Yet, this can only be achieved through a formal framework that enables young adults to travel such as the working holiday agreements negotiated with other countries. The subjectivity New Zealand universities aspire to aligns itself with both the interests of the tourism industry and the New Zealand Government. They hope to achieve well-travelled New Zealand citizens who participate in the global knowledge society and engage in the generation of global knowledge. These institutions not only focus on enabling young adults to experience other cultures, but emphasize opportunities to increase skills and knowledge, which implies the potential to contribute to New Zealand. This is closely related to the anticipation of citizens that participate in the global economy and use opportunities to work worldwide. The RSA works to constitute New Zealanders who show an awareness of New Zealand's war history, acknowledge the past, and identify themselves with their country. The RSA indicates how young adults can be more intensely New Zealanders by including a visit to ANZAC Cove in their travel plans. This not only corresponds to aspirations of the New Zealand Government, but also to a general governmental interest in building national awareness.

I have illustrated that the interests of different authorities are brought into alignment around the New Zealand OE. It is now important to analyse the relationship between the interests and practices of these authorities and the ways young New Zealanders articulate their personal aspirations. It is particularly important to explore ways in which what is experienced as a personal life plan is shaped by the regulatory framework and to investigate generalised understandings about travel and work outside New Zealand. This analysis will show how many young New Zealanders hope to use the OE to pursue the project of the self, which is a crucial aspect of the subjectivities at the centre of liberal governance through freedom.

In the following chapter, I will investigate ways in which the fields of possible actions defined by different authorities intersect with ideas and specific practices associated with the OE. This involves an analysis of finitude as one of the defining characteristics of the OE and an investigation of ways in which young adults anticipate the freedoms associated with their OE.

## Chapter Five: Conditions of possible actions

---

### Introduction

The previous chapter illustrated ways in which governments, non-governmental organisations, and travel operators shape OE discourses and define the field of possibilities associated with young adults' travel and work overseas. Before analysing the discourses of young New Zealanders with respect to the OE, the current chapter explores how their possibilities for work and travel elsewhere are shaped by conditions of possible actions, which include key features, specific meanings, and practices associated with the OE. I investigate how these conditions facilitate the freedom to embark on an OE and simultaneously shape the choices young adults make. I use this analysis to explore how many young New Zealanders may be disciplined through embracing the freedoms associated with the OE. In what follows, I look at the OE as a finite experience, before I investigate how research participants spoke about their anticipated OE. Through analysing both conditions for possible actions as well as personal aspirations with respect to overseas work and travel, I aim to investigate discursive constructions of the OE as freedom. Moreover, I want to illustrate the interconnection between power and freedom associated with OE travel and its significance for the discursive constitution of young New Zealanders' subjectivity as OE travellers.

### The OE - finite freedoms

OE discourses set up a range of possible actions within which young New Zealanders can freely act and make decisions about their overseas travel and work. This exemplifies the way in which power works through discourse according to Foucauldian understandings. As discussed in Chapter Two, Foucault (1980) argues that power does not simply control and restrict people's opportunities, but creates options for agency. Following his analysis, OE discourses have both enabling and constraining effects: they

are enabling as they offer young New Zealanders a range of possible actions with respect to overseas work and travel. Yet, they are also constraining, as young adults' choices, decisions, and actions with respect to the OE are tied to this range of possibilities.

The New Zealand OE is constructed as a finite experience; going away for an OE means travelling overseas for an extended, but limited period, followed by a return to New Zealand. Finitude, a main characteristic of the OE, clearly differentiates between the OE and other forms of travel, such as those relating to holiday or migration. As a key feature and condition for doing an OE, it specifies the range of possible actions available to young adults.

Set up as a finite experience, the OE is not simply about exploring other countries but also about coming back to New Zealand. Those who return are often expected to be different as a result of their time away. The following analysis of questionnaires, web-based discussions, and conversations with young New Zealanders planning their OE highlights the sort of changes they envisage as part of their time abroad and the way the OE is constituted as a finite experience. The analysis illustrates that, when making plans, most participants are well aware that they only leave New Zealand for a limited time. Most interviewees explicitly expressed their plans to come back to New Zealand, which implies that the freedom to leave is closely related to the anticipation of return:

*I can't imagine that I don't come back.* (Zoë)

*I can imagine living in other places for a short time, sort of a few years, sort of time length [pause] but not settling. I think I will always come back here.* (Susan)

*I have no other plans [pause] yeah, I suppose I just see myself always coming back.* (Chris)

While Zoë, Susan, and Chris experience the intention to return as subjective and personal, it is a shared discourse of the OE and the majority of participants appear to constitute themselves as returnees who will only be away for a finite period. It seems that the prospect of returning has enabling effects on many of them. If it was not explicitly part of the OE, going away from New Zealand to work and live elsewhere



would be very similar to emigration. However, some interviewees' talk implies that the prospect of going away permanently might stop them from leaving. Ruby stated: *'I couldn't [pause] I couldn't leave here forever'*. The OE offers Ruby the opportunity to go away, while it also includes coming back to New Zealand. Ruby and others' reactions indicate that the prospect of returning can be interpreted as facilitating their journey overseas.

The ways in which OE discourses shape young adults' actions and intentions as they are planning to embark on their OE exemplify Foucault's understanding of how discourses shape social practices – and how these practices, in turn, shape discourses. Returning to New Zealand is part of the subject position constituted through OE discourses. By taking up the position of an OE traveller who returns, many young adults simultaneously engage in the constitution of the OE and the subject positions associated with it; their OE practices shape the discursive field as they reinforce the finite character of the time away.

Some interviewees' talk about New Zealand as their home provides another illustration of how young adults use OE discourses to constitute themselves as returnees:

*I'll always have New Zealand to come back to because it's my home.* (Rebecca)

*I know that it [New Zealand] is here for me (...). It could change while I'm away, but it will still be home, you know.* (Andrew)

The way in which Andrew and Rebecca anticipate coming back indicates that they see their OE as an extension to their base experience as New Zealand residents rather than an alternative to living in New Zealand. Andrew's statement suggests that knowing New Zealand remains his home offers the opportunity to return at any time, which can be interpreted as offering security as he goes away. Lynn, a blogger currently on her OE in the UK, articulated similarly: *'I went with the thought if it didn't work out then I could always go home'*. These statements exemplify how some young adults constitute themselves as simultaneously free and secure with respect to home. The continuity of New Zealand as home and the opportunity to return seem to facilitate their decision to go away.

This analysis illustrated that finitude is a key feature of the OE which facilitates some young adults' journey overseas. Yet, the finite character of the OE not only facilitates engaging in these practices, but also shapes the ways in which young adults plan their time away. In what follows, I illustrate how the prospect of being away for a finite period shapes their plans by discussing the OE as a time out, conceptions of New Zealand and elsewhere, and their preparation for a temporary time away.

## **Time out**

While many young adults plan to have a finite break from New Zealand, the length of time they intend to stay away for is not determined before departure, but considered to be flexible. The degree of flexibility regarding the length of time of an OE and how participants value it is of particular interest:

*The plan that I've got at the moment is probably about two years. So, two years from next month sort of thing. But (...) I'm flexible on that if I find something else that I wanna see. Well, and an extra six months on top of the two years, then do that or another year or I might find that I absolutely hate it or something like that and just can't, and I'd miss home so I'd go home at that stage. (Chris, interviewee)*

The flexibility Chris described occurred in many interviews as well as in online conversations. An anonymous blogger currently on an OE in the UK stated:

*I think a lot of people go away for two years sort of thing, but I'm pretty flexible. If I wanna stay, I'll stay, if I wanna go, I'll go. I enjoy being here at the moment and can't imagine going back to NZ soon. But things may change.*

Most interviewees similarly expressed their intention to leave New Zealand for approximately two to three years; however, they consider themselves to be flexible regarding their time away and seem to value this as one of the freedoms of the OE. They imagine themselves as having the freedom to choose where and when to go as well as when to come back to New Zealand. According to Zoë and Skye:

*I think there will come a point, like I've got no timeframe on my OE apart from probably, probably no more than two years, I would say, um, and I'm sure there will be a time when I'm like 'oh, I wanna go home', you know? (Zoë)*

*I think it will come down to when I feel like I'm ready to go back, you know. When I feel like coming home and when I feel like I've seen everything else. (Skye)*

The repeated use of the phrase '*I feel*', '*I think*', or '*I want*' in Skye and Zoë's talk signals that they consider the time of their return as a personal choice. This exemplifies that they imagine themselves as freely choosing agents and their OE as an expression of freedom, including the freedom to decide when to return. By participating in OE discourses, young adults take up a subject position that is largely associated with freedom. Yet, I have indicated that this freedom is constructed through discourses and the regulatory frameworks that govern the movement of citizens. I interpret this as an example of what Rose (1999: 68) refers to as 'governance in accordance with freedom'. It illustrates how freedom works as a means to ensure that young adults conduct themselves in desired ways according to, for instance, governmental and commercial interests. While imagining themselves as freely choosing when to return, young adults' actions are consistent with the formal regulations, which define returning to New Zealand as part of the OE while leaving opportunities to choose exactly when to return.

For some young New Zealanders, the freedom to choose the length of time of their OE is defined – and restricted – through conditions associated with the working holiday agreements. As shown in Chapter Four, these visas only enable 18 to 30 year-olds to stay away for a limited period, which can be flexibly chosen within this age range. According to the formal regulations, the end of an OE accomplished through a working holiday visa is ultimately defined through the age limit on these visas. This illustrates that young adults' return is simultaneously chosen and bureaucratically shaped. Opportunities to pursue an OE are circumscribed by discourses which link the freedom to leave to a projected return to New Zealand. This shows how people can only be free in a way that aligns with authorities' understandings of being free (Rose 1990): governments construct the position of a freely moving citizen who returns to New Zealand and many young adults act accordingly.<sup>42</sup>

Some participants anticipate their OE not only as a temporary break from New Zealand to experience different places and cultures, but also as a professional break. The

---

<sup>42</sup> OE discourses construct the OE as a temporary movement overseas. Yet, some New Zealanders who initially travel overseas for an OE may not return. A female blogger, for example, wrote about how she got '*sidetracked*' on her OE by marrying an American soldier. Living in the States now, she considered herself to be on an '*eternal OE*'. However, her time away does not qualify as an OE any more, but has turned into permanent migration.

prospect of having a break from their profession in New Zealand to work in different areas seems appealing to them and partly facilitates their OE. Chris, an interviewee employed in the conservation area in New Zealand, valued this opportunity as another freedom of the OE:

*I was thinking I would do something completely random. Um, just because of the fact that I'd probably be working in conservation for potentially quite a few years after I get back to New Zealand, um, in the future. And so, I was sort of thinking, well, this could be a good opportunity to just do anything really and do something that I'll never have the chance to do ever again. (Chris)*

By seeing it as a 'good opportunity', Chris' statement illustrates the enabling effect of the possibility of taking a finite break from his profession in New Zealand. At the same time, he indicates the alluring effect of knowing that this break is only temporary. Yet, what participants such as Chris consider as freedom in terms of employment overseas can be linked to ways in which the range of possible actions available to them is set up by governmental and commercial interests. Following Rose (1996a), this range can be considered as shaping the forms of life and lifestyles available to young adults. The choices they can make in terms of their OE are tied to the conditions associated with overseas travel, work, and residence negotiated by different governments. As outlined in Chapter Four, governments partly establish working holiday agreements due to the prospect of augmenting their casual workforce, in particular during peak seasons of specific industries. This interest has an effect on young New Zealanders' international job opportunities. While some participants see themselves as empowered to choose and positively value the chance to work in a different field, it provides the workforce that governments or commercial operators such as American summer camps desire. This illustrates how discourses may give shape to the desire in people to act in ways that are consistent with authorities' aspirations.

This discussion has illustrated that young adults expect their OE to be a temporary break from New Zealand while simultaneously anticipating their return. The intention to leave temporarily appears to be closely related to ways in which they think of New Zealand and other places. In what follows, I investigate what they articulated about New Zealand and elsewhere to explore the OE as both a push to be overseas and a pull to return home.

## Conceptions of New Zealand and elsewhere

In talk about New Zealand and elsewhere, most participants indicated that they do not leave New Zealand because they do not like it. Instead, they expressed rather strong positive feelings for New Zealand: *'I know I'm gonna miss New Zealand. I mean that's a given. I love New Zealand'* (Chris, interviewee). Most interviewees and bloggers articulated similar feelings and thoughts. Yet, while their general view of New Zealand was predominantly positive, many of them characterised it as a small, geographically isolated and secluded country with *'an island feel to it'* (Susan, interviewee), *'far away'* (Sina, interviewee) from *'the big wide world'* (Fiona, interviewee). The following comment made by an anonymous blogger who links the conception of New Zealand to the popularity of the OE can be interpreted as a summary of what many participants expressed about New Zealand:

*I've always thought that most New Zealanders hate the thought of being stuck on an island forever. And growing up I always thought that New Zealand was so small and there was nothing here to do. It just seems natural to want to go overseas and try things that you've only seen on TV or in books.*

While this blogger indicated that New Zealand does not offer much to do, the interviewee Ruby expressed more assertively: *'New Zealand is just so, that sounds really ungrateful, but it's just so...it seems so boring and so, I don't know'*. Similarly, most participants' reactions indicate that they imagine New Zealand as less vibrant and exciting than other places. The imaginary of elsewhere, on the contrary, is constructed as more stimulating and lively, which seems to have alluring effects on young adults.<sup>43</sup> Both imaginaries can be interpreted as positive pushes away from New Zealand. The material gathered through interviews and online discussions indicates that some participants – such as Ruby and the anonymous blogger mentioned above – assume their chances to have experiences in New Zealand to be limited.

The interviewee Sina stated that people leave for an OE *'because you don't wanna live in a little bubble and stay in New Zealand and not ever experience anything else.'* Sina

---

<sup>43</sup> According to questionnaire results, many young adults seem to draw their conceptions of places outside New Zealand on media representations. Furthermore, OE returnees' stories seem to shape how they anticipate and imagine their OE.

uses the image of a bubble to illustrate what she thinks about being in New Zealand. The adjective '*little*' carries a negative connotation, directed at the size of New Zealand compared to the rest of the world. Sina's talk implies that she considers living in New Zealand as living in a limited and secluded space, which may only provide a restricted range of opportunities and experiences. This implies that living in New Zealand is sometimes associated with constraints from which some young adults try to escape – at least temporarily to be able to widen their range of experiences. The idea of leaving to experience something else seems appealing as it offers opportunities '*to find out what's out there that's not here*' (Anna). Yet, leaving for an OE seems particularly appealing, because it involves the return to New Zealand, which most participants consider to be a good place to live. Overall, most interviewees and bloggers imagine the OE to offer them opportunities to experience elsewhere – while not denigrating or relinquishing New Zealand.

The imaginary of elsewhere as exciting and alluring contributes to many young adults' desire to travel overseas. Through travelling to different places, they aim to become a person who has successfully negotiated the difficulty of living elsewhere for a while. Through their practices, they actively engage in the construction of this position at the same time and reinforce this imaginary of an OE traveller.

According to some interviewees, alluring effects of conceptions of elsewhere partly derive from the opportunity to easily access other countries:

*If you want to travel overseas from New Zealand, it's such a long way away. (...) there's not very many places you can go to for three weeks. (...) And I guess maybe that's the difference between New Zealand and perhaps Australia and somewhere like Europe and America, is that they do have options for short international holidays.* (Anna)

*They [New Zealand and Australia] are islands on the other side of the world so to speak. And it's not like any other continent in the world you can't just like drive there – you can't just like fly there; it would always take you a couple of hours.* (Tom)

Following Tom and Anna, New Zealand's geographic isolation and the accessibility of other countries elsewhere are factors facilitating the OE – pushes away from New Zealand. Temporarily living, for instance, in Europe offers them the chance to

experience the geographic closeness of different countries, which they associate with opportunities for international short-term holidays. Contrary to Europe, New Zealand only offers limited opportunities for international daytrips or short-term holidays due to distance and the cost involved in travel. I interpret the desire to experience these forms of travelling through an OE as the desire to access the freedoms that are generally associated with crossing international boundaries. The way in which they aspire to this freedom illustrates the aspiration of people in modern liberal societies to live their lives as free citizens (Rose 1999). Young adults aim to demonstrate being free by crossing boundaries and being freely moving individuals. Their aspiration to freedom illustrates that they have embraced liberal ideals. However, my investigations suggest that only specific types of international movement are considered to offer opportunities to adequately experience and demonstrate this freedom. According to the participants in this study, Australia does not seem to offer these opportunities and is therefore identified as a peculiar elsewhere.

### **Australia – a peculiar elsewhere**

The range of possible actions associated with OE travel are set up in a way that young New Zealanders can choose their OE destination from a variety of countries, including Australia. Yet, a common discourse suggests that simply travelling to any other country is not sufficient for an OE, but that there are more precise conditions of distance and difference with respect to OE destinations. All participants agreed that Australia does not qualify as such a destination. The bloggers Matthew and Adrien argued:

*I think Australia is too close to home to count as an OE. It's only a 3 hour flight away and I think the OE concept is more about being very far from home. (Matthew)*

*Australia definitely doesn't count as an OE. Whilst physically separate from Australia, culturally everything is the "same, same but different". They eat tim tams, twisties, BBQs and the national dessert is Pavlova. Play the same sports (...). Have a similar relaxed outlook. Similar accent, language and slang. Essentially there is not enough of a culture shock for it to be a true OE. (Adrien)*

These statements exemplify common arguments referring to Australia's geographic closeness and its apparent similarity to New Zealand. For these reasons, Australia is

identified as a peculiar elsewhere and most participants did not expect the same sort of experiences as in places outside Australasia. Skye illustrated another reason:

*Just the fact that it [pause]I could go anytime [pause] sort of makes it [pause] doesn't fulfil all my sort of criteria I guess for thinking that it is an OE. (Skye, interviewee)*

According to Skye, Australia does not qualify as an OE destination as she thinks New Zealanders have the possibility to go there any time. This aligns itself with the construction of the OE as a journey to countries not as easily accessible from New Zealand in order to achieve freedoms that are more difficult to access from there.

OE discourses define the subject position of an international traveller who seeks experiences and adventures in countries outside and also different to New Zealand. They offer young New Zealanders the opportunity to constitute themselves as such a person. This exemplifies that discourses enable people to act – yet to act in certain ways only. Young New Zealanders are enabled to go away for an OE; however, their OE destination has to meet particular requirements in terms of distance and difference articulated by the discourses of young adults – criteria that Australia does not fulfil. In this respect, OE discourses facilitate intercontinental travel and work beyond Australasia. The desire to experience places different to New Zealand is particularly related to a specific intention young adults have when leaving for their OE.

### **Living elsewhere makes home better**

Most of those interviewed planned to temporarily move overseas to experience other countries, even though they expressed positive feelings for New Zealand. Some interviewees indicated that through doing an OE they hope to explore whether they want to live in New Zealand permanently. They seem to constitute themselves as people who freely choose to live in New Zealand. Yet, to be able to make this choice they have to experience life elsewhere first:

*I think the aim basically for me of an OE would be to decide whether we [boyfriend] wanna maybe stay somewhere else for a longer period, maybe forever, or come back to New Zealand, which is the plan I have at the moment, because I love New Zealand. But there may be somewhere else I love more. (Sina)*



Two other interviewees shared this view and articulated that they had *'never seen anything worse or anything better'* (Rebecca) and were therefore not sure whether they would return to New Zealand. Emma stated that *'something might happen so that I wanna stay there, but (...) I'll probably come back'*. They imply that they cannot freely choose to live in New Zealand until they have experienced life elsewhere. This indicates that they are 'not merely 'free to choose', but *obligated to be free*' as Rose (1999: 87, italics in original) has suggested. Against the construction of the freely choosing individual in advanced liberal societies, living in the home country can be seen as the result of a free and discerning choice as opposed to a path that is determined by birth or parents' migration.

While only few participants said they would decide whether to return after they have experienced life elsewhere, the majority aimed to gain a greater appreciation for New Zealand through doing an OE. Analysing their talk suggests that they assume going away to be necessary to be able to appreciate their home better. Being away for a while offers them the opportunity to experience other places, which may reaffirm their initial positive attitude towards New Zealand.

*A common sort of factor coming out of an OE is this 'yeah, I had a good time over there, it made me realize how good we [pause] or how lucky we are back in New Zealand'. So I suppose it's just, I think it's very significant in the fact to reaffirming how good New Zealand is. (Chris, interviewee)*

*Sometimes, to be able to appreciate what you have you have to see the other side. (Fiona, interviewee)*

The desire to appreciate New Zealand better through going away works as a powerful feature of the discursive field associated with the OE. Initially, it drives young adults to leave New Zealand. At the same time, it indicates the underlying expectation of New Zealand as their favourite place as a result of the comparison with other countries. The intention to gain a greater appreciation of New Zealand implies that many young adults constitute themselves as returnees as they go away.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>44</sup> Most interviewees, questionnaire respondents, and bloggers anticipated returning to New Zealand. Yet, the odd participant recognised that returning may be associated with negatives such as limited opportunities to have the experiences available overseas. Fiona, for instance, indicated that returning to and living in New Zealand may therefore not appeal to her.

The analysis of various aspects relating to conceptions of New Zealand and elsewhere illustrates that what young adults think of their home and elsewhere can simultaneously be interpreted as a push to travel overseas and a pull back to New Zealand. It also illustrates that OE discourses set up conditions for doing an OE that young adults have to meet to achieve the freedoms and subject positions offered by these discourses. To be able to access what OE discourses offer, young adults not only have to act according to the conditions, but also prepare for their journey overseas. In what follows, I analyse what they articulated about preparing their OE and illustrate that the degree of preparation varies.

### **Preparing to leave temporarily**

In talk about preparation for their OE, most interviewees' initial reactions were characterised by a sense of flexibility and spontaneity similar to what they articulated when discussing the length of time of an OE. Emma's statement exemplifies this: *'You go and make a decision, you tell your work and then you book a ticket. And the rest of it has to happen'*. These reactions seem particularly consistent with the common association of the OE as an opportunity for freedom and choice rather than bureaucracy and regulations. Yet, while participants did not immediately mention the need to prepare, several discourses of the OE suggest that some preparation is necessary before embarking overseas. Accordingly, Ruby stated that *'there are things that you have to sort out. (...) I mean you do need to [pause] be a bit prepared'*.

The need to prepare implies that the OE is not simply an expression of freedom and spontaneity and can be interpreted as a constraint articulated by OE discourses. Like Ruby, most interviewees had recognised some need to prepare their OE. For example, Sina indicated:

*I'd make sure I had everything and I'd research into the places I was going. And even like things could change and I could go somewhere else, I would research into that probably as well. I'd still want to do things spontaneously, but I'd always have a backup that I kind of knew what I was doing and I had everything (...) planned.*

Sina expressed her intention to be spontaneous, but organised and safe at the same time, which exemplifies a common discourse that occurred in the interviews. While they emphasize their intention not *'to commit to doing anything'* (Anna), but to be spontaneous and flexible, their talk indicates that they seek some security when overseas. What many of them consider as a need to prepare can be interpreted as the desire to prevent risk. In talk about their preparation, many interviewees articulated different aspects with respect to financial or professional preparation that reflect this desire.

It appears that most participants have recognised the need to prepare for their OE financially. Reactions in interviews, questionnaires, and online discussions indicate that saving is considered to be a crucial part of this preparation:

*When my friend and I finish our degrees, um, we both gonna work for 6 months full time to save for it. Maybe a year, depending how much money we can save. (Jess, interviewee)*

*We've [boyfriend and Anna] been saving for about a year, so we've got enough cash. (...) we have to have enough to get us to Canada and to get us to the next destination. (Anna, interviewee)*

While saving leads to the financial means necessary to access the freedoms associated with the OE, saving itself can be interpreted as a constraint the OE involves, as it imposes direct constraints on young adults' spending while in New Zealand. Yet, the interviewees' talk indicates that they do not consider themselves to be constrained. Instead, they expressed the need to save as their freely chosen course of action. Their focus on saving as essential to be able to do an OE illustrates their aspiration to freedom. The choice to save to be able to access freedoms and opportunities associated with the OE confirms that they live their lives as freely choosing individuals.

Finances were not the only preparatory aspect participants considered to be crucial. Interviewees, questionnaires, and bloggers also thought of the preparation of qualifications as generally important. Most interviewees expressed their intention to get properly qualified before leaving in order to increase their job chances overseas. In these respects, different ideas occurred between students and participants in paid work. While most students expressed the intention to graduate before going away, such as

Susan who said *'it's really just a question of finishing my degree at the moment'*, those in paid work aimed to gain work experience within their profession before departing. This can be interpreted as a tactic to manage risk; young adults intend to get qualified to be able to find employment and earn the money necessary to fund living and travelling overseas. Kevin articulated his plan to obtain a teacher's degree before doing his OE in order to increase his job opportunities overseas:

*I'm not kind of one of those people that, you know, they just go and they're like 'ah, find a job', you know, 'be sweet'. But I'd love to go over there and actually, you know, earn some good money.* (Kevin)

By distinguishing himself from others, Kevin's talk implies that the intention to gain a qualification before going away is experienced as subjective. Yet, my research suggests that this is a shared discourse of the OE. Many interviewees articulated similar intentions and some questionnaire respondents added comments to their questionnaire stating that their preparation is to *'make sure to have skills that can be applied in other countries'* (female questionnaire respondent, student). These findings indicate that in contemporary New Zealand, many young adults intend to prepare their qualifications before going away.

While acquiring qualifications is generally considered to be important amongst participants, opinions on the preparation of employment differ depending on participants' occupational backgrounds. Most participating students do not intend to apply for jobs elsewhere before leaving New Zealand, whereas most of those in paid work have the intention to set up jobs before leaving or prefer *'to have some idea of jobs or where to apply'* (Fiona). This is closely related to their intention to *'make money'* (Oliver). Contrary to most students, most interviewees in paid employment do not *'really see the point in getting a [pause] in just working in a bar or some less qualified position where I got less money'* (Fiona).

Exceptions to the difference between students and employees' preparation of jobs were articulated by Stephen, an engineering student at the University of Canterbury, and Victoria, studying at the New Zealand College of Early Childhood Education. Stephen who generally indicated high career aspirations, intends to find employment with an

internationally operating business that could possibly transfer him overseas. Victoria's plan involves working as a nanny overseas. According to her: *'It's the best way to use my nanny qualification [pause] because if I wanna travel, I might as well go over and use my nannying and do nannying'*. Working as a nanny overseas offers Victoria the opportunity to combine travelling and employment, as nannies usually get to travel with the family for which they work. This exemplifies that people's capacities to act and the range of possibilities available to them are shaped by specific conditions as Rose has suggested (1996a: 17). Having a nanny qualification offers Victoria opportunities that are not part of the range of possible actions available to participants from other professional backgrounds. These capacities to act are specifically available to her due to her qualification.

Overall, the analysis of different aspects relating to the OE as a finite experience demonstrates how this characteristic of the OE shapes the range of possibilities. As young New Zealanders embrace the finitude of the OE in their plans of travelling and working overseas, OE discourses have powerful effects on them and shape their decisions. So far, the analysis only concentrated on this key feature of the OE and some common practices. In what follows, I focus on an analysis of young New Zealanders' discourses and investigate ways in which they anticipate the freedoms associated with the OE.

## **Anticipating freedom**

The fields of possibilities associated with OE travel are shaped through conditions of possible actions that facilitate specific ways of pursuing an OE. In the previous section, I examined finitude as a key feature of the OE and analysed how young adults embrace this feature in their plans. In what follows, I aim to explore aspects relating to young adults' anticipation of their time away – ways in which they imagine the OE and how it fits in their life plans. I focus on how their anticipation of the OE shapes the options available to them or, more particularly, how the OE is, in part, facilitated by it. To achieve this, I investigate the prevalent conceptions of the OE as a social imaginary and analyse the participants' perception of the formal rules and regulations. Lastly, I

investigate their anticipation of different lifestyles in their twenties and thirties, as their conceptions of these phases in life particularly seem to contribute to their current mobility.

### **The imaginary of the OE**

The participants' talk suggests that the OE is attached to particular meanings, associations, and practices, which imply that it is inseparable from a certain imaginary. Taylor (2004: 2) argues that imaginaries are not only sets of ideas, but rather 'what enables, through making sense of, the practice of a society'.<sup>45</sup> This implies that people make sense of social practices through their imaginaries, while the practices also shape these imaginaries. Following Taylor's understanding, I analyse the imaginary of the OE and investigate how it shapes the practice of doing an OE and vice versa.

Talk relating to young adults' OE imaginary suggests that the OE is predominantly viewed positively and anticipated as a positive experience:

*I expect it to be fun and, um, lots of new experiences.* (Sina, interviewee)

*I mean hopefully just sort of have a good time. You know. Fun time and not, and not sort of worry too much.* (Susan, interviewee)

The way in which the interviewees Sina and Susan imagine their time away can be interpreted as characterising their positive imaginary of the OE. Other interviewees articulated similar ideas about their time away and expressed their anticipation of '*fun*' (Rebecca, Skye, Fiona), '*new experiences*' (Tom), and a '*good time*' (Chris). As the anticipation of positive experiences occurred across interviews, questionnaires, blog discussions, and informal conversations about the OE, it appears that the positive imaginary is a shared discourse of the OE.

Many participants' anticipation of their time away shapes and is shaped by ways in which they imagine their OE. Following Taylor's understanding, this imaginary can be

---

<sup>45</sup> Taylor's general definition of imaginaries as the ways in which people imagine their social existence and surroundings has been introduced in Chapter Four.

interpreted as a factor that enables the OE as a social practice in New Zealand. This implies that young adults' temporary time away is not only facilitated by formalities such as visa agreements or financial means, but also by their imaginary of their time overseas, which indicates the crucial position of the OE imaginary within OE discourses. Anticipating the OE as a means to achieve positive experiences can be interpreted as the way in which the OE imaginary works as a push away from New Zealand.

Some interviewees' anticipation attributes meanings to the OE that illustrate their association of it with discourses of freedom and opportunity. Chris articulated '*the expectation of a great time, so much freedom*'. He not only expressed his positive expectation, but also indicated the significance of discourses of freedom in the context of the OE. Similarly, most interviewees and bloggers aspired to and anticipated the OE as an opportunity for freedom and expressed this in various ways. An anonymous blogger currently on an OE in the UK stated: '*I feel like I can do what I want as this is my OE*'. This comment underlines the assumption that the prospect of freedom, expressed in the ability to freely make decisions and act, is a vital part of the OE imaginary. Aspiring to freedom aligns itself with Rose's understanding of freedom as an ideal in advanced liberal societies. The way in which participants imagine the OE to involve freedom illustrates how this prospect is discursively constructed as part of the OE.

In turn, expectations associated with the OE shape and reflect the imaginary of it. In talk about their expectations, most participants seem to focus on positives while not explicitly anticipating negative experiences as potentially part of their OE. However, in-depth investigations of their OE imaginary reveals that most interviewees are well aware of their focus on positives while overlooking potential negatives. Most of them seem to recognise that their imaginary may not be consistent with what they are going to experience:

*My expectation, you know, like that whole... my ideal scenario. But I'm under no illusion that it was... that it will be like this. I don't think it will be like this. But it's that I cruise over there and get a primo job and it will be great. And meet lots of people and, you know. I don't think it's gonna be like that, but, of course, that's what I'm hoping for. (Emma)*

*I definitely don't expect it to be all roses, that's for sure. (...) There will be some perhaps frightening moments, but you know, it's all part of the experience. (Andrew)*

*You definitely want it to be that magical experience. But reality is it won't be like that. (Tom)*

The interviewees Emma, Andrew and Tom are aware of some negative experiences they may have while overseas. Yet, they predominantly focus on and anticipate positive experiences. Similarly, many other interviewees consider the OE to be a means to achieve positive experiences, which can be interpreted as a particular push away from New Zealand. The way in which they mostly overlook negative aspects of the OE reinforces and contributes to the general imaginary of the OE as positive experiences. This imaginary does not only derive from young New Zealanders' experiences and stories they heard, but is also promoted by commercial and non-profit travel operators as described in Chapter Four. Fiona expressed her perception of media representations as promoting the OE as a positive experience. In her opinion, *'they [the media] make it up to be all fun'*.

In their representations, travel operators continually seem to draw upon expectations and clichés highlighting the commonplace association of the OE with fun, freedom, choice, and individuality. Through this, they contribute to the construction of the positive OE imaginary and shape the ways in which many young adults think about their OE. They promote lifestyles associated with freedom and individuality as desirable which meets young adults' existing desires and needs and thus, may shape their lifestyle choices. Following Rose (1996a), these choices are crucial in pursuing the project of the self. This implies that travel operators may shape the ways in which some young adults pursue this project in a New Zealand context. Inspired by media representations and other manifestations of the OE imaginary, young adults anticipate their OE as a way to transform their selves in the direction of happiness and fulfilment – while autonomously choosing their life-style.



The analysis of the OE imaginary has illustrated how many participants optimistically anticipate their time away and highlighted the significance of the prospect of freedom as part of the OE imaginary. I interpret this imaginary as a push overseas as it seems to have enabling effects on young adults. In what follows, I investigate the participants' perception of the regulatory frameworks that formally govern their movement overseas. Through this, I aim to illustrate that most of them do not consider their opportunities for freedom to be limited.

### **Free as regulated**

Considering capacities to act, constraints generally seem to be visible to people, as they clearly stop them from acting in certain ways. Enabling features, on the contrary, are more likely to be invisible due to their positive effects – as long as people can act without restrictions, they may not be aware of the features that enable these actions. This general phenomenon can be exemplified in the context of the New Zealand OE by looking at young adults' perception of the regulatory features that formally enable them to temporarily live and work overseas.<sup>46</sup> In what follows, I investigate how participants perceive the enabling features of arrangements negotiated by governments and analyse whether they seem invisible to them.

Many young adults interviewed were not familiar with authorisations to stay in other countries. While formal rules and regulations relating to overseas work and travel set up the fields of possibilities associated with the OE and are thus inevitably linked to it, my research material suggests that many participants are not attentive to these formal frameworks. In talk about visas and their preparation, most interviewees expressed that they haven't '*looked into all that in detail yet*' (Rebecca) and therefore '*don't really know*' (Thomas). Like Rebecca and Thomas, most interviewees did not know any details about visas and commonly reacted with no response or a comment indicating their lack of knowledge. In particular, there is only a vague understanding of the

---

<sup>46</sup> The regulatory features that enable young New Zealanders to temporarily live and work overseas have been outlined in Chapter Four.

working holiday agreement. Most interviewees did not know any or only very little detail about these agreements – even though the majority were planning to travel on a working holiday visa.

*All I know is the one that people apply for and you can work for a year or so.*  
(Skye)

*Well, I just know that you can get a two year work visa, um, being a Kiwi [pause]  
for the UK [pause] up until you're 27?* (Zoë)

Similarly, most interviewees' reactions to questions regarding the working holiday scheme varied from not knowing the name to mistaking it for a work visa.<sup>47</sup> Their reactions illustrate that most participants do not attend to formal regulations associated with the OE, but imagine themselves as freely choosing and free.

This material exemplifies the phenomenon introduced earlier – the enabling features of the OE seem mostly invisible to many participants. According to their perception, OE discourses do not seem to include formal regulations. Instead, they imagine themselves as freely choosing an OE as an expression of and a means to achieve freedom, which illustrates the effectiveness of this discourse. While many participants see their actions as what Rose (1996a: 17) has called 'expressions of personality', they are shaped by the formal regulations. This is evident by their plans to go away for two to three years being consistent with the formal framework. As indicated in Chapter Four, formal regulations set up a regulated space of freedom as they define possible actions and their limits. Young New Zealanders are only enabled to pursue an OE under the conditions associated with the visa agreements. Following Rose (1996a), these conditions can be interpreted as systematically limiting their capacities to act. Freely choosing to do an OE entails acting within the regulated space or, to use Rose's (1996a: 17) term, within a 'narrow range of possibilities', as the OE is not outside the discourses but also obeys their rules and logics. This implies that the visa agreements represent powerful features that guide the actions of free subjects.

---

<sup>47</sup> The lack of attention to visas was also evident amongst questionnaire respondents. Thirteen out of 24 respondents stated they did not know anything about New Zealand's working holiday agreements. Yet, nine out of these 13 were planning to pursue their OE without qualifying for an overseas passport.

Some interviewees are not only inattentive to rules and regulations that enable the OE, but even take the opportunity to pursue an OE for granted. Anna expressed her opinion of the OE as an entitlement: *'I knew New Zealanders could go to the UK and work for two years. Like that was just [pause] that was accepted that that was our right'*. Using the term right suggests that Anna considers herself to be entitled to travel to, live, and work in the UK for a while. By seeing it as a right, she indicates that she does not expect any restrictions to this entitlement. This seems to be a common discourse, as a similar perception of the OE occurred in a number of interviews and many informal conversations.<sup>48</sup> Yet, while many participants imagine themselves as entitled to travel freely, their freedom is highly regulated through the formal rules and regulations that govern the international movement of citizens. This illustrates how freedom and regulation are intertwined in OE discourses and can be interpreted against the background of the Foucauldian analysis of power. As outlined in Chapter Two, Foucault (1980, 1982) states that power functions to structure possible actions. Following Foucault, the formal framework that enables the OE structures young adults' decisions regarding their journey overseas and can be considered as exerting power over them. Formal regulations with respect to overseas work and travel can be interpreted as forces beyond their control that shape their actions.

Those interviewees who knew about the working holiday agreements seemed well aware of its character as both enabling and constraining. Fiona indicated that some conditions associated with this visa may be experienced as constraints:

*You only get it once in your life. So, in some ways, like in my position, in some ways you can only go once and then, if you want to stay, you have to get sponsorship from a company to stay. So, it's kind of like you get one shot at it.*

She also implied that her OE travel plans may be shaped by conditions associated with the visa as she indicated that *'the whole thing would be very different if I was entitled to a visa like a UK passport'*.<sup>49</sup> Fiona is well aware of the restrictions the working holiday scheme entails and wants to take the opportunities the agreements offer; however, she

---

<sup>48</sup> Many interviewees particularly shared the idea of a right to temporarily stay and work in the UK, which could be led back to the high proportion of New Zealanders travelling to the UK for their OE.

<sup>49</sup> As Fiona did not specify what would be different, I can only speculate that she may go overseas later or may stay away longer than entitled through the working holiday visa.

knows she has to do this at a particular time due to the conditions linked to the agreements. Her talk indicates that individual capacities to act may differ depending on the eligibility for visas other than the working holiday visa. Young adults who are entitled to an ancestry visa or overseas passport, for instance, have a higher degree of flexibility when they plan their time overseas, which may be interpreted as a greater freedom.

Talk about visa agreements constantly reminded me of my position as a researcher. As I was conducting research on the OE, some participants – in particular those who did not know about the visas – seemed to consider me as an expert on regulations associated with overseas work and travel. When they were insecure about details of the working holiday agreements, some interviewees initially expressed their vague ideas in the form of questions, implying I might know the answer due to my preparation and background research. The perception of me as a knowledgeable expert was contrary to my position as someone from another country, an outsider to and presumably not knowledgeable of the OE phenomenon.

This discussion has illustrated how many young adults' anticipation of their time away and their imaginary of the OE facilitates their temporary movement overseas. Ways in which they perceive the enabling features of the OE indicate that they imagine themselves to freely make decisions. Yet, while young adults constitute themselves as OE travellers, they are simultaneously constituted as such by the formal regulations that shape the options available to them. In what follows, I analyse how young adults anticipate freedom of the twenties and responsibilities of the thirties and how this shapes the range of possible actions and the OE.

### **Freedom of the twenties and responsibilities of the thirties**

The New Zealand OE seems to be typically pursued by young adults in their twenties. This is, in part, shaped by the regulatory frameworks, which set up overseas travel and work opportunities for young adults aged 18 to 31. Yet, the OE as a practice for people in their twenties also seems to be shaped by young adults' anticipation of their future life stages.

Most interviewees expressed that they consider their twenties as the best time to live and work abroad for an extended period. They seem to imagine themselves in a position without commitments and responsibilities that might stop them from going away. As this was a shared discourse, it appears that the twenties are generally associated with a more flexible situation. Asked why they plan to go away in their twenties, the interviewees Anna, Ruby, and Sina said:

*Well, I have no commitments, you know. I don't own a house, I own a car that is worth very little, so, you know, I don't have any financial commitments, I don't have any family commitments in terms of children. (Anna)*

*An OE is a thing you do before you have commitments, before you have children. (Ruby)*

*You want to have fun without having a burden of a child. And you want to be able to experience everything and just be free. (Sina)*

These statements exemplify the way in which many participants constitute themselves as free in their twenties. They interpret the fact of not having commitments such as loans, homes, and children as an opportunity for freedom. In these respects, freedom particularly refers to their mobility and the opportunity to travel. This aligns itself with the imaginary of the OE as an opportunity for freedom. The interviewees' talk indicates that they do not only aim to achieve this freedom through doing an OE, but also hope to demonstrate that they are free.

While aspiring to freedom associated with the OE in their twenties, most participants seem to expect themselves to be restricted in their freedom once they return. They anticipate the time after their OE as the time to settle, make commitments, and take up responsibilities:

*After your OE it's kind of I suppose I see it as the time to settle down, to get our career under way and your life under way. (Victoria, interviewee)*

*You've got it out of your system and then you're ready for the [pause] the real life I suppose, starting families and things like that. Yeah, committing to a more, um, settled down period of life, I suppose, rather than a bit more of a nomadic life that you live when you're a bit younger. (Chris, interviewee)*

Chris and Victoria's talk reflects the flexibility and spontaneity that is commonly associated with the OE. However, similar to Chris, most participants do not expect themselves to live a nomadic life indefinitely. As they value not having commitments as an expression of freedom, their talk about commitments upon returning can be interpreted as an expectation of having less freedom, which may particularly contribute to their mobility during their twenties. Yet, it seems that young adults do not only expect to be restricted in their freedom, but also accept the construction of not being as free and flexible later in their lives:

*I don't think I would ever be in a position where I would go away for such a long period of time. Like I think I'd be in a position maybe where I'm going for three months or something like that. But I always imagine that you would have commitments here, like I always imagine I will have a job that I have to come back to or, um, yeah, family commitments. (...) I want to settle down like I'm excited about that period as well. (Anna, interviewee)*

While Anna indicated that she does not expect herself to be as flexible later in life, she simultaneously articulated her excitement about that period. This positive anticipation of responsibilities when returning to New Zealand was a common discourse that occurred in many conversations. The interviewee Chris also considered settling to be positive, as he was *'quite looking forward of having a family'*. Their talk implies that participants consider these restrictions on their mobility and, ultimately, their freedom as a chosen course of action. They constitute themselves as those who want to return and settle down and at the same time, actively engage in the construction of the subject position of settled people in their thirties. Against an expectation of the thirties that young adults look forward to, settling in New Zealand becomes the result of a discerning choice as opposed to a life course routine. This aligns with Rose's idea of people in modern liberal societies as *'obliged to be free'* (Rose 1996a: 17, italics in original), which implies that they are to live their lives in a way that confirms they are freely choosing citizens. By constituting themselves as free to pursue an OE in their twenties and simultaneously anticipating settling in New Zealand in their thirties, young adults demonstrate that they live their lives as freely choosing individuals. They choose freedoms associated with the OE in their twenties and freely choose to return, settle, and have less freedom in their thirties.

Overall, this discussion illustrates the importance of discourses of freedom amongst those who participated in this study. The anticipation of responsibilities when returning to New Zealand and the apparent acceptance of a situation whereby their mobility and freedom might be restricted indicates that once this freedom has been demonstrated, it can be reflected upon at times when they are less flexible or free.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has illustrated how ideas, key characteristics, and common practices associated with the OE as articulated by young adults shape the range of possible actions set up through governments, non-government organisations, and travel operators. Investigations of the OE as a finite experience indicated that finitude is a key characteristic articulated by various OE discourses. The analysis highlighted the ways in which those planning to leave for an OE are constituted and simultaneously constitute themselves as returnees as they leave New Zealand.

This chapter indicated that the prospect to return can be interpreted as an enabling feature of the OE. Some young adults only seem to go away for an OE as they know – or at least assume – that this is for a limited period. Experiencing life elsewhere for a while allows a comparison of New Zealand and other places and enables young adults to freely make decisions about where to settle. Most participants, however, expect to return to New Zealand. The analysis of participants' anticipation of their time away demonstrated that most of them focus on positive experiences. While they seemed aware of potential negative experiences, they anticipated the OE as a good time, fun, and an opportunity for freedom. Their positive anticipation is particularly reflected in their imaginary of the OE, which I interpreted as a positive push outside New Zealand.

The conditions associated with the working holiday scheme offer young adults aged 18 to 30 opportunities to temporarily travel, live, and work overseas and simultaneously imply their return to New Zealand. In talk about their anticipation of different phases in their life, many young adults express their aspiration to have freedom in their twenties and to take on the responsibilities associated with settling and raising children in their

thirties. These expectations seem to facilitate young adults' mobility in their twenties, which aligns with the opportunities offered through working holiday visas. In these respects, the anticipation of the OE, the freedoms it involves, and the responsibilities on their return shape the conditions of possible actions and enable the OE.

In what follows, I focus on young adults' discourses and investigate who is best positioned to exercise capacities to pursue an OE as well as subject positions defined through OE discourses. Through this, I aim to illustrate ways in which the prospect of freedom through the OE shapes many young adults' motivations and desires to go away.



## Chapter Six: Subject positions and capacities

---

### Introduction

Chapter Five highlighted ways in which young adults' freedom to temporarily live and work elsewhere is systematically shaped through key features and practices that characterise the OE. In this chapter, I extend my analysis of the OE as a form of governance through freedom by examining how capacities to pursue an OE are defined. This analysis is particularly relevant, because the OE can only be achieved as an opportunity for freedom if young adults can embrace the capacities and subjectivities constructed through OE discourses. I also investigate how OE discourses construct subject positions for many young adults to take up. Through this analysis, I aim to explore how the OE provides opportunities to work on oneself while simultaneously being worked upon by authorities.

Capacities to pursue an OE are constructed both by authorities' definitions of possible actions and young adults' anticipation of the OE as well as understandings of self and others they articulate. First, I examine ways in which research participants embraced their capacities to pursue an OE, before I investigate how the exercise of these capacities is shaped by feedback they experienced on OE plans. This is followed by an investigation of what constitutes the subjectivity many young adults aspire to through doing an OE. The analysis of what they hope to achieve through the OE facilitates an examination of how OE discourses contribute to their motivation to travel overseas and, moreover, the constitution New Zealand subjects.

### Capacities to do an OE

OE discourses offer young New Zealanders the opportunity to constitute themselves as international travellers who seek challenges associated with living overseas. Formally, this opportunity is available to everyone in New Zealand as the range of possible

actions is not limited to specific groups. However, my research material suggests that the freedom to temporarily travel and work elsewhere constructed through OE discourses is not equally available to all young adults in New Zealand. Opportunities to take up the subject positions offered by these discourses require young adults to hold particular positions and have certain qualifications.

Contrary to common representations of the OE as something that is generally done, not every young New Zealander embarks on an OE. Even so, it appears that although some resist participating in OE discourses, most young adults have to engage with them at some stage in their lives:

*Everybody talks about doing it. I think I haven't met any Kiwi student, you know, anyone born in New Zealand that has never talked about going on an OE.* (Rebecca, interviewee)

*It seems really hard to meet people who haven't done it or aren't planning on doing it. (...) People are obsessed with it.* (Susan, interviewee)

Rebecca and Susan assert that many or even most New Zealanders engage with OE discourses. Rebecca went on to state that 'it's whether or not these people are [pause] willing later in life to actually do something about it and get there. You know, because it's one thing to talk about it but it's another one to actually do it'. Through this, she implies that doing an OE is the result of a free choice available to all young adults. However, while capacities to engage with OE discourses are available to all New Zealanders, not everyone is similarly positioned to actually pursue an OE. In what follows, I investigate who is best positioned to do an OE and explore whether certain groups of young adults constitute themselves as non-OE travellers and select themselves out of OE discourses. To explore ideas about key capacities to do an OE, I first examine who considers temporarily living and working elsewhere as an integral part of their lives. Through this analysis, I aim to explore how and for whom the OE is constructed as a normalising discourse.

## Participating in OE discourses

Initial assumptions about participation in OE discourses and capacities to do an OE can be drawn from participants' talk about different stages in their lives and where the OE fits in the life course in contemporary New Zealand.<sup>50</sup> Most interviewees' talk indicates that they consider the OE to be a normal phase of life, which many described as a sequence of different stages:

*It's just another stage in your life. Part of it. School, uni, OE, then work. (...) It's just normal. (Thomas)*

*Well, there's generally you go to primary school, you go to secondary school, (...) and then, [pause] yeah, go to get a degree (...) then, yeah, generally the next thing is going to do your overseas experience before you get a permanent job. (Zoë)*

Thomas and Zoë clearly distinguish between different phases in life and considered the OE to be a stage alongside school, university, and work. Similarly, Blanche described herself as currently in her 'second stage', studying at university, after having finished school, what she considers to be her 'first stage'. She anticipated the OE as 'a whole different stage'. When expressing these ideas, many interviewees used their hands to demarcate the different stages of school, university, the OE, and possibly settling. Through this, they illustrated and also emphasized the distinctions they made.<sup>51</sup> The stages they distinguished are associated with specific lifestyles and subject positions such as the schoolchild, the student, and the adult or parent. By defining the OE as a stage in the life course, the participants imply that they associate temporarily living and working overseas with a particular subject position, as meaningful as each of the others. Specific ideas about subject positions associated with doing an OE will be discussed later in this chapter.

When articulating ideas about the OE as part of young adults' life course, Skye and Ruby said:

---

<sup>50</sup> Aspects relating to the life course were also discussed in the previous chapter when I examined how many participants conceptualise the freedom of the twenties and responsibilities of the thirties as specific elements in their lives. Although the discussion in this chapter draws on similar aspects, it focuses on the place of the OE in some people's life course.

<sup>51</sup> The interviewees held their hands as if marking out a space between their two palms, moving this demarcated space sequentially from left to right or vice versa.

*OE is just something you do.* (Skye, interviewee)

*It's just, don't know, quite generally done by people. Like my age (...) you'd do an OE (...). You just do it.* (Ruby, interviewee)

Similarly, many other interviewees talked about the OE as '*normal*' (Chris, Oliver) and something that is '*generally*' (Sina, Susan) done. This indicates that they consider opportunities to pursue an OE to be available to everyone. Yet, when analysing participants' talk about the OE as an integral part of the life course, it seems important to reflect on their backgrounds. Ideas about the OE as a regular part of life or an activity that young adults generally and '*just*' (Skye, Rebecca, Thomas) do were predominantly articulated by either university students or graduates. Research material and experiences I had while conducting this study suggest that capacities to pursue an OE are particularly concentrated in this group. For them, the OE may have undergone a process of normalisation through which it has become an expected form of behaviour. However, this does not apply for young adults in general and the OE cannot be generalised as part of everyone's life course. While many interviewees indicated that the OE had been normalised in their social networks, they recognised that this is not inevitable:

*I suppose for me and my circle of friends the norm is to go on an OE. Yeah, that's [pause] that's THE norm.* (Chris, capital letters for his emphasis)

*Most of my friends are going to or doing it or have done an OE. So, if I asked them and they said 'oh no, I'm not gonna do it' that would be out of the norm so to say.* (Oliver)

Oliver and Chris, university graduates, expressed thoughts about the OE as a norm; yet, they specified the group for which they think this applies. Similar specifications occurred in many other conversations as interviewees articulated that '*all*' (Sina) or '*lots*' (Blanche) of their friends considered the OE to be '*the norm*' (Thomas). In talk about those who do an OE, many interviewees explicitly articulated ideas, which indicate that doing an OE is closely related to young adults' educational background:

*I guess I'd say it's probably more people who went to university. And my guess is that they would go more than people who didn't a) get an education or b) did trades.* (Skye)

*I know people who sort of haven't gone to university that sort of thing. Got, um [pause] tradesman and that sort of jobs, maybe, and (...) they definitely haven't been as enthusiastic to get as far as Europe. (Thomas)*

Similarly, many other interviewees and some bloggers expect educated people, in particular university students and graduates, to be more likely to pursue an OE. The OE returnee Laura commented in an online discussion that *'(s)omeone without tertiary education might be more inclined to see Australia as an OE destination'*. She continued and described experiences she had while travelling on her OE, which are consistent with assumptions of those who had not been overseas: *'Other Kiwis I met while living in London, Jerusalem and Brussels had completed tertiary education'*. Thomas and Laura indicate boundaries of those young adults' travel aspirations and experiences that have not pursued university education. I will discuss below that these travel experiences may not only be restricted to national but also discursive boundaries. Similar to many interviewees and bloggers, some questionnaire respondents made additional comments in response to the statement of the OE as a thing to do, indicating that this is *'the more so for those who have gone to uni'* (female questionnaire respondent, student). These findings suggest that the OE is predominantly associated with young adults who have pursued certain forms of tertiary education. This implies that doing an OE may not be the generally desirable form of behaviour constructed by some participants. Instead, there may be different sets of understandings about the OE among different groups in New Zealand.

Assumptions that young adults' participation in OE discourses may be associated with their engagement in discursive practices relating to tertiary education align themselves with results of a study conducted by Myers and Inkson (2003). For this study, they interviewed 50 OE returnees to obtain information about the New Zealand OE. Thirty-six of these interviewees had had tertiary education experience and 24 graduated from university; only two had been manual workers before going overseas. Although Myers and Inkson allowed for the possibility of a sample bias, they conclude that the 'OE is primarily a middle-class phenomenon undertaken by educated people' (Myers & Inkson 2003: 96).

These findings are consistent with experiences I had when I approached young adults to participate in this research. As outlined in Chapter Three, I initially intended to recruit participants from different tertiary education institutions in Christchurch. However, despite repeated attempts, I was not able to recruit young adults at the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology (CPIT), the Avonmore Tertiary Academy, and the Ruben Blades Hairdressing Academy. My attempts to recruit students at CPIT generated comments about the OE as typically undertaken by university students and graduates, but not CPIT students. Reactions I experienced when talking to some CPIT students implied that they did not participate in OE discourses to the same degree as university students. Some students said: *'We are CPIT students, we don't do an OE'* or *'we are CPIT students, we are poor. We can't afford to go overseas'*. These comments suggest that they had taken up subject positions of those for whom the OE is not available. By underlining their position as CPIT students, they indicate that their constitution as non-OE travellers may be related to the differences between students who choose different forms of tertiary education. It seems that these young adults engage with and participate in discourses that do not include aspirations to pursue an OE, but make other ways of being and crafting sense of selves available. However, while not stepping into OE discourses, CPIT students still had to engage with them. This is evident as they know about the OE as a travel phenomenon and assume university students to be more likely to pursue an OE than themselves.

Overall, these research findings and experiences indicate that access to OE discourses is differentiated. More precisely, it appears that young adults' capacities to pursue an OE are associated with their engagement in other discursive practices, in particular those relating to tertiary education. Following Foucault (1972, 1978), this illustrates how power is exerted through discourses and how they shape social life. The CPIT students that I approached constitute themselves as part of social worlds that do not include doing an OE, but prioritize other activities and forms of life. Following Foucault (1978) and Burr (1995), by taking up subject positions associated with studying at a polytechnic, these young adults experience the world from this perspective and gain a sense of subjectivity that is less likely to comprise travelling on an OE. As a result, they position themselves outside OE discourses and construct self consciousness that does not include anticipation of the OE. At the same time, they sustain the categorization of

normal and abnormal forms of behaviour for polytechnic students. In contrast, most university students and graduates who participated, on the contrary, position themselves as agents within OE discourses and constitute themselves as OE travellers. This reinforces the assumption that capacities to do an OE are tied to discourses relating to tertiary education. While it appears that the OE has undergone a process of normalisation for university students, the same may not apply for young adults involved in other forms of training and education.

Differentiated access to OE discourses implies that a life course which includes the OE cannot be generalised as normal for young New Zealanders, but is predominantly available to those who can exercise capacities to pursue an OE. In what follows, I aim to investigate in more detail how these capacities are shaped.<sup>52</sup>

### **Shaping capacities – Encouragement and opposition**

Whether young adults exercise their capacities to pursue an OE is potentially shaped by feedback, expectations, and common practices they experience within their social networks. Positive feedback, for instance, might encourage young adults to exercise their capacities, as they may feel supported in their plans. Negative feedback, on the contrary, may result in limitations of their capacities and, moreover, reflect restricted OE travel opportunities of those who articulate the feedback. In what follows, I analyse some of aspects related to feedback and practices, which potentially shape young adults' capacities to do an OE.

An analysis of what shapes young adults' capacities to pursue an OE indicates that their circles of friends are particularly important. This is the site where they are most likely to be exposed to others' plans for overseas work and travel. General feedback from other New Zealanders or ways in which their families either support or undermine their plans

---

<sup>52</sup> Consistent with the findings of this section, most participants of this study participated in discursive practices that seem to facilitate participation in OE discourses, as they were either university students or graduates. Due to this sample formation, I allow for the possibility of a sample bias in the following analyses of the OE, and I am aware that the results may only reflect the practices of university students and graduates. Yet, as various attempts to recruit participants directly from other education institutions were fruitless, the analysis may also represent the OE discourse accurately.

seem to occupy a minor position; yet, they add to young adults' perception of the OE as a socially accepted phenomenon.

In talk about feedback on OE plans in general, most interviewees, questionnaire respondents, and bloggers assert that the majority of New Zealanders are '*generally really encouraging*' (Tom, interviewee) and '*very supportive*' (Chris, interviewee). Many of them experienced positive reactions to their travel plans. Zoë (interviewee), for instance, stated that '*(p)eople wouldn't say "oh no, you shouldn't do that"*', and Rebecca declared that she has '*never met someone who said "don't go"*'.<sup>53</sup> The positive feedback that many of them experienced aligns itself with media representations of the OE. As outlined in Chapter Four, these representations generate the imaginary of positive experiences and opportunities for freedom for those who embark overseas. Through this, organisations such as the RSA or travel operators like STA and IEP contribute to young adults' desire to do an OE; moreover, they positively shape young adults' capacities to pursue an OE, as without positive and encouraging representations, OE travel may not be as tolerated and desirable. Without being exposed to an environment that expresses acceptance towards the OE, young adults may not develop the same desire to go away. It is in these respects that general feedback, practices, and representations produce a form of power that shapes the ways in which young adults construct and shape themselves.

A common discourse occurring in interviews and web-based discussions suggests that most participants similarly experienced support from their families, more specifically their parents. As according to Chris:

*They [parents] have certainly never said "don't go". Um [pause] they've always [pause] basically, my parents have always been pretty supportive in everything that I've done. (...) The main thing that they wanna see, um, for you, is happiness and that you're living life to the fullest and that you're, you don't feel like in years to come that you've got any regrets. (Chris, interviewee)*

---

<sup>53</sup> Similarly, the majority of questionnaire respondents either agreed or strongly agreed to the statement that people they talk to about OE plans are predominantly supportive and encouraging. No respondent experienced negative feedback to discussions of OE plans.



Chris indicates that he considers the OE to be something else his parents support – alongside various other things. Likewise, most bloggers and interviewees described their parents as ‘supportive’ (Kathryn, Skye, Adrian) and indicated that they ‘help as much as they can’ (Rebecca). This can be interpreted as part of the middle class parenting practice of supporting children to do things that help them construct personally desired, culturally prescribed middle class subjectivities. Yet, some participants indicate both the parental practice of supporting children in their personal goals as well as concerns relating to typical parental care, as according to Kathryn, ‘occasionally you need to reassure them that things are safe now’. According to participants’ talk, most of their parents seem to have recognised and accepted the importance of the OE for their children. However, this is not inevitable, which can be illustrated by Ruby’s experiences, as her parents are not supportive of her OE plans:

*If I talk to my parents, they go out there like “well, that’s a bit unrealistic, you have a huge student loan to pay off when you get out of university”. (...). Your parents like to [pause] crash your big ideas. (Ruby, interviewee)*

She went on to describe her family in more detail:

*On my dad’s side, it’s really sort of quite traditional, you know. The women stay at home (...) I’m the first in my family, on my dad’s side, to finish high school to seventh form, to the final year and to go to university. I’m the first. And, all the people, all the adults didn’t even do seventh form in school. (...) I’m the one that’s doing all the new stuff.*

Due to the lack of support from her family, Ruby characterises them as ‘narrow-minded’. Yet, what she considers to be narrow-minded may just be drawing on the discourses of those who have not received tertiary education. Coming from this background, Ruby’s family does not seem to be exposed to OE discourses. Ruby even states that travelling ‘is not part of their reality at all’, implying there may be different realities for people from different backgrounds. Similar to CPIT students’ resistance to participate in OE discourses, Ruby’s experiences indicate that not everyone is constituted or constitutes themselves as equally positioned to participate in these discourses. Instead, the OE appears to be an activity associated with particular social worlds and the engagement with different forms of tertiary education. Ruby’s family’s lack of participation in tertiary education does not only shape their own capacities to pursue an OE, but also their perception of Ruby’s options. Aspiring to employed

positions, earning money, and preventing debt seem to be more important to them than experiencing life elsewhere. Ruby, however, indicates that she does not see financial debt as a hindrance to embark on an OE.

The reason why her family's resistance has not shaped Ruby's view of the OE may be related to her educational background. As a student at university, she is exposed to others who constitute themselves as OE travellers. In what follows, I investigate how these networks shape young adults' capacities to pursue an OE. Contrary to verbal feedback on OE plans, I consider common practices within young adults' circles of friends to be particularly important when analysing how capacities to pursue an OE are shaped through social networks outside the family.

### **Practices within networks of friends**

As indicated earlier, many university students and graduates who participated in this study not only consider a particular form of travelling to be normalised as the OE, but think of doing an OE as '*the norm*' (Chris, Thomas, interviewees) for themselves and their circle of friends. Chris indicated that his desire to go away may be shaped by his friends' practices of doing an OE:

*I've been looking forward to my OE for the last few years, because all my friends have been going for about, for about [pause] the last five years it probably started, all my friends just disappearing overseas and doing their OEs and coming back and then another lot of friends going.*

Like Chris, most university students and graduates I talked to articulated that their friends commonly embark on OEs. Some interviewees could not even think of anyone who was not planning to go away. These reactions indicate that university students and graduates do not only have capacities to pursue an OE, but that doing an OE is constituted as a normal form of behaviour for them.

The way in which some interviewees talk about the OE as desirable, or even the norm within their circle of friends, indicates that they actively engage in the categorization of desirable and abnormal forms of behaviour. The university student Sina stated in her interview that '*it's normal. If you don't go it's kind of abnormal*'. This statement

illustrates how Sina categorizes behaviour into normal and abnormal forms. Her reaction may shape and reflect the desirable practices and subject positions within her circle of friends and thus, have an effect on others' capacities to pursue an OE. Many interviewees similarly engage in the categorization of different forms of behaviour. Victoria, for instance, who does *'not expect everyone to want to go overseas'* articulated that those who decide not to pursue an OE have to justify their decision: *'I mean when they give me their reasons of why they don't wanna go it's kind of legitimate a lot of the time. Understandable.'* While many interviewees articulated similar interests in reasons for not doing an OE, they did not express the same interest in motivations to go away. The need to justify the decision to stay in one's home country demonstrates that going away for an OE is considered to be the desirable and possibly normal course of action for some young adults in contemporary New Zealand. Most interviewees' talk about the need to justify not going indicates that young New Zealanders, students in particular, may be judged in relation to the norm of doing an OE (Rose 1999).

The constitution of the OE as a normal course of action may not only positively shape capacities to do an OE but also result in an expectation to participate in OE discourses and thus, have disciplining effects. These disciplining effects are relevant if young adults examine other people's behaviour in relation to this norm. For some, this may result in the perception that they have to apply to themselves the standards of behaviour that are set within their networks or the environments in which they seek to be incorporated. Whether young adults perceive the OE as a norm can be examined by an investigation of their talk about doing an OE as an expected course of action.

While most participants initially denied the possibility that doing an OE was expected, some of them indicated an expectation relating to the OE as a form of institutionalised freedom. An anonymous blogger stated: *'I think there is a certain age when you are expected to go, but if you haven't done it by your late twenties no one will really query that'*. This statement illustrates that despite some expectation, the OE is not something young adults have to do. The interviewee Skye shared this view and considered questioning the decision not to go as signalling an expectation:

*I think if I said all 'no' they'd go 'oh, why?'. And I think then that shows that there's an expectation. But no expectation like they'd be disappointed in me if I didn't go. That would be ok. But there is an expectation that that is what you would want to do.*

According to Skye, not the OE but the desire to travel appears to be expected. As the OE is generally associated with freedom, this can be interpreted as a way in which people in advanced liberal societies are to aspire to freedom, an ideal in these contexts. By expecting others to aspire to freedom, some participants actively engage in the constitution of this discourse.

The interviewee Emma expressed her impression of existing expectations more assertively and said doing OE was 'largely' expected. While articulating this impression, she simultaneously separated herself from those who may feel that they are expected to pursue an OE:

*No, I don't feel an expectation from anyone. (...) I would hate to think that was why I was doing it. [pause] No, I really wanna go for me and [pause] um [pause] get world experience, world view, all that stuff.*

Zoë, another interviewee who considers the OE to be an integral and potentially expected course of action for young New Zealanders, constituted herself similarly: 'I don't think I'd be doing it for, you know, because I'm expected'. Emma and Zoë imagine themselves as independent and freely choosing as opposed to susceptible to expectations within their social networks or New Zealand more generally. They think they are making a free and discerning choice and constitute themselves as different to those who do an OE because of social expectations. Emma particularly emphasizes that she seeks to travel, not to fulfil expectations, but to realise her own aspirations. Similar ideas and intentions also occurred in conversations on the blog:

*There is definitely a lot of peer pressure to go. If you don't, people might think you're a little strange but I don't think that's the main driver for most people. It's not for me anyway. (Jason)*

*I'd always wanted to travel, but it wasn't till a couple of years ago that I actually thought about going and doing a proper OE. I think a lot of that has to do with having friends who had just returned or were planning on going, which kind of leads to a kind of peer pressure – 'so when are you going?', sort of thing. And hearing stories of all the sorts of things that you see and do. (Adrian)*

The bloggers Adrian and Jason mention peer pressure in association with the OE; yet, they emphasize that this is not the reason for them to travel. While Adrian indicates the possibility of being shaped by his friends' practices and narratives, he underlines that his decision is ultimately a matter of personal choice. Ways in which bloggers expressed their ideas about peer pressure in online discussions as opposed to interview situations suggests that the anonymity of web-based discussions facilitated more open talk about the OE as a form of institutionalised freedom. This may have been more difficult to express in face to face interactions when participants did not have access to experiences and opinions of other participants.

Similarly, most participants did not imagine themselves to be shaped by '*peer pressure*' (Adrian, Jason) or expectations, but anticipate the OE as an opportunity to demonstrate that they embrace the values of freedom, independence, and autonomy. However, as young adults pursue their individual interests in anticipation of personal challenge, they conform to the construction of freedom as an aspiration for young educated New Zealanders – in this sense they are governed through freedom (Rose 1996a: 157). Yet, they consider their decision to pursue an OE as personal and subjective, which illustrates the ways in which 'what began as a social norm (...) ends as a personal desire' (Rose 1999: 88). Following Rose, this is a key component of the institutionalisation of freedom.

Overall, the discussion of expectations surrounding the OE in the social networks of research participants suggests that it is normalised in certain contexts. The analysis illustrates ways in which young adults actively engage in the construction of these standards through taking up particular subject positions and creating meaning of themselves and others. The OE is considered to be a desirable form of behaviour for many of those pursuing university studies. Yet, participants constantly stress that, while they may be expected to want to travel, their decision to pursue an OE is entirely personal and not a response to peer pressure. In this way, they constitute themselves discursively as the active, choosing, and agentic subjects that Rose associates with governance through freedom.

The analysis in this section suggested that opportunities to do an OE are not equally available to everyone, but that university students and graduates are best positioned to participate in OE discourses. The discussion indicated that going away for an OE is associated with the desire to be a certain kind of subject – a normal New Zealand citizen – and illustrated the seduction of freedom. In what follows, I investigate what constitutes the subjectivity that young adults aspire to and how they hope to achieve it through doing an OE.

### **The desired subjectivity**

In the previous section, young New Zealanders' capacities to pursue an OE were linked to their engagement in other discourses, especially those relating to different forms of tertiary education. The current section investigates how not only their capacities to act, but also their aspirations to develop a particular subjectivity are constituted through ideas, meanings, and practices associated with the OE.

According to the theoretical understandings employed in this thesis, discourses make options of being available to people and offer them opportunities to take up various subject positions. Following this idea, OE discourses offer young New Zealanders the opportunity to take up the subject position of an international traveller who seeks adventures overseas and negotiates the challenges associated with temporarily living elsewhere. Through analysing conversations about qualities associated with people travelling on an OE, this section explores in more detail how OE discourses offer opportunities to shape and constitute oneself as a person who embodies particular characteristics. As these opportunities are predominantly available to those who can exercise capacities to pursue an OE, the following analysis may only reflect how university students and graduates are constituted and constitute themselves through OE discourses.

While OE discourses construct the subject position of an active, choosing, and controlling individual, they simultaneously seem to work as a disciplinary regime through which power operates via the promises to access freedoms and develop a

particular subjectivity. This subjectivity embodies positive characteristics such as being adventurous, open, unconstrained, interested in global experiences, exercising initiative, cultured, and cosmopolitan. Some OE discourses promote these personal qualities as achievable through doing an OE. Commercial operators, for instance, reinforce the imaginary of a free and unconstrained traveller through their representations relating to the world in people's hands (IEP) or the opportunity to define one's own OE (STA). Some young adults aspire to develop a subjectivity characterised by these attributes through doing an OE. According to the discussion in Chapter Five, it is important for them to assert that their plans to pursue an OE are not a response to peer pressure, but a freely chosen decision.

The analysis of how young New Zealanders actively shape their selves is based on Foucault and Rose's approach to the constitution of subject positions and, ultimately, subjects. As outlined in Chapter Two, Foucault suggests that individuals shape and constitute themselves in an active fashion, by practices of the self. Following Foucault, Rose (1999: 178) states that people are continuously working on the project of their selves, making up themselves and shaping an autonomous identity 'through choices in taste, music, goods, styles and habitus'. He argues that when making these lifestyle choices, they generally follow personal desires and aim to 'maximize the worth of their existence to themselves' (Rose 1996a: 157). Following Rose's idea, the OE can be interpreted as representing an element of some New Zealanders' project of their selves. It offers them opportunities to actively constitute themselves through their choices with respect to temporarily living and working elsewhere. I illustrate below that young adults follow certain aspirations with respect to overseas work and travel, self-assertion, and self-improvement when making these choices.

### **Views of non-OE travellers**

Before moving on to an analysis of typical characteristics that participants associated with an OE traveller, I investigate what they had to say about those young adults who do not participate in OE discourses. What they articulated about non-OE travellers is indicative of the qualities and characteristics they associate with those travelling on an OE – qualities that they potentially hope to achieve.

Most participants indicate a fine distinction between young adults who participate in OE discourses and those who are not interested in doing an OE. The interviewees Victoria and Emma exemplify how participants construct distinctions between themselves and those not contemplating to go away:

*It's up to personality. A lot of people who don't wanna go are often those quiet, shy people or those people who quite like it at home or quite like it in New Zealand. Or don't [pause] aren't big risk takers. (...) I suppose in my own head I'm just thinking 'don't you wanna get out?', because that's why I wanna go. That's the reason why I'd want to go because I'm sick of, like I don't think I could handle being here for so long. (Victoria)*

*I don't wanna be judgemental. I think, um [pause], first of all, I think 'oh that's sad' but then I'm like 'no, hang on, it's not'. That, you know, they've got just as much right to stay as I have to go away. It's not (...) my choice that I can make for them. But I do think it's sad. I think if people have the opportunity, they should try and see outside New Zealand because (...) we are so small and isolated and that's just, you know, like the bigger world is not here. So, you should at least try and experience that. (Emma)*

While Emma and Victoria consider doing an OE to be a matter of personal choice, they carefully indicate their opinion of those not interested in going away. Similarly, the interviewee Fiona states that if people '*don't wanna go, that's their choice*'. Yet, as she thinks experiencing other places '*does help you to grow and to learn*', she does not know '*who's better off*'. Others said that those not planning to do an OE are '*not motivated*' (Tom) or '*don't have any self-confidence*' (Sina). While most interviewees construct differences between themselves and those not interested in doing an OE rather cautiously, Ruby and Skye expressed their judgements more assertively:

*Oh, come on, who would really, in their right mind, not go and start working straight away? Without even contemplating travelling and doing something fun for a couple of years? I think they are crazy! (Ruby)*

*If they were probably complete people, they, you know, if they were a bit more stable and stuff, then they might want to go overseas but it's too much to be comfortable. (Skye)*

These reactions illustrate how those who position themselves as agents in OE discourses engage in the construction of the subject position associated with non-OE travellers as less adventurous and potentially less free people. These judgements indicate that they



imagine and constitute themselves as different to non-OE travellers, as they are interested in global experiences, personal growth, and willing to take risks. The negative phrasing regarding the qualities of those not planning to do an OE indicates that participants such as Ruby and Skye consider themselves to be '*in their right mind*', '*stable*', or '*complete*' as they embrace OE discourses. Through planning their OE, these young adults constitute themselves as fun-loving and free, as people who think differently as they go overseas.

Similar distinctions between OE and non-OE travellers were also discussed in online conversations. Some bloggers articulated differences between themselves and those not planning to go away more explicitly than interviewees, which may be due to the anonymity guaranteed through online participation. Kathryn, for instance, commented:

*Many people are content to stay in their home town with their high school friends and their high school spouses and have little or no interest beyond the mortgage, new car, who is getting married, having babies. They're not interested in other countries or experiences.*

She went on to clearly differentiate herself from these people:

*I don't ever want to be one of those people. You almost need to justify to them why you have chosen to go overseas instead of staying in Small Rural Town <sup>TM</sup> and contributing to the meagre gene pool. Really. I have better things to do...*

Kathryn's comment exemplifies how potential OE travellers perceive those not participating in OE discourses as not interested in global experiences. According to her and other participants, this may be interpreted as living a narrow life, possibly lacking opportunities and agency. Kathryn indicates that she considers staying in New Zealand as negative and not as worthy as going overseas. Doing an OE offers opportunities to escape what is considered as narrow and small and do '*better things*' instead. Going away for an OE is a way for Kathryn to experience choice and stimulation and – following Rose (1996a) – to maximize the worth of her existence to herself.

By constituting themselves as different to those not contemplating to do an OE, the participants illustrate that they have taken up the collective subject position of an OE traveller. Following Foucault (1978) and Burr (1995), their talk indicates that they

experience the world and themselves from the perspective of this position. It is the subject position of an OE traveller that participants have negotiated for themselves that enables them to construct meaning of themselves and others. Through constructing distinction and judging lifestyles associated with staying at home as less free and less risk-taking, they actively engage in the construction of the subject positions associated with both doing an OE and staying in New Zealand and reinforce the belief that certain personal characteristics can be achieved through doing an OE.

The way in which participants differentiate themselves from those not planning to pursue an OE illustrates that they are simultaneously constituted by discursive power and engage in the exercise of it (Foucault 1980: 98). OE discourses enable young adults to freely make decisions regarding their OE, as they construct a range of possible actions relating to overseas work and travel and set up the parameters for the OE as a finite experience. At the same time, these discourses foster certain forms of living and being. As young adults constitute themselves as agents and aspire to those forms of behaviour that are promoted as desirable, they are also governed. They exercise power through their judgements of non-OE travellers and engage in the constitution of what characterises a desirable subjectivity.

Through analysing young adults' view of non-OE travellers, I have illustrated how they engage in the construction of subject positions and meanings associated with both doing an OE and staying at home. This analysis has opened up the possibility of discussing what they hope to achieve through temporarily living and working elsewhere. In what follows, I analyse their talk about characteristics associated with OE travellers to explore who they aspire to be.

### **Constructing a freely choosing subjectivity**

Contrary to negative talk about those who do not want to pursue an OE, conversations about qualities associated with OE travellers are characterised by positive and affirmative reactions. Many participants articulated their positive evaluations of those who go away for an OE:

*You have to have a certain sense of confidence. I think. Because if you are quite shy and reserved and unconfident, I just don't know how someone like that would cope with it. (Fiona, interviewee)*

By making assumptions about shy and reserved people, Fiona implies that OE travellers may not only be confident, but also open and able to cope with difficulties. Similarly, other interviewees consider young adults who travel on an OE as *'strong willed'* and *'active'* (Sina), or *'focused'* (Rebecca) and *'motivated'* (Susan). Doing an OE is commonly constructed as the means to either achieve or demonstrate these qualities. Skye stated: *'I need to push my boundaries now, like I feel too comfortable, I feel bored and I'm young'*. Skye's aspiration to push her boundaries can be interpreted as a willingness to face challenges associated with life elsewhere. She implies that facing these challenges offers opportunities to increase abilities and demonstrate strength. Moreover, it includes the development of qualities that are promoted as desirable, such as the ability to negotiate differences and cope with discomforts. In her talk, Skye specifies what she aspires to as being *'independent'* and *'reliable'*. In these respects, the OE can be interpreted as an opportunity to make up oneself and choose desirable ways of living. The aspiration to gain positive qualities indicates how some young adults utilize the OE as a way to work on their selves in order to improve and maximize their happiness and 'quality of life' (Rose 1996a: 158).

Following participants' aspirations to the development of particular personality traits, the OE may be interpreted as a life-changing experience. Accordingly, some bloggers describe it as a *'huge eye opening experience'* that *'will help you grow as a person'* (Marie) or *'invariably make us who we are'* (Tammy). The interviewees Victoria and Susan said:

*I think it's like a really character building thing [pause] to, um, to put yourself in that position and learn from it. So, yeah, it'll be really positive. And coming out of it, you'd have so much, like you'd have so much self esteem and all those, you know, all those little things. (Victoria)*

*Ultimately, it should significantly change how you view yourself in the world. (Susan)*

These statements illustrate how power works through OE discourses via the promise of gaining character building qualities and demonstrating risk taking. The way in which

they freely choose to aim at self-improvement illustrates that this discursive power operates internally rather than externally. Those who articulated ideas about self-improvement may be disciplined by the aspiration to gain qualities that are promoted as achievable through doing an OE. In these respects, OE discourses shape young adults' desire to go away for an OE, as they embody aspirations that young adults attempt to achieve. Most interviewees' talk indicates that these discourses have already shaped them, as they have positioned themselves as agents in OE discourses. Having identified themselves with the subject position of an OE traveller, they imagine themselves to either possess or be likely to develop some of the qualities generally associated with leaving New Zealand. This is supported by the differentiation between themselves and those not doing an OE discussed above.

This discussion demonstrated how young adults actively engage in the construction of subject positions associated with doing an OE and staying in New Zealand. They contribute to the construction of the imaginary of what the OE gives young adults and what constitutes a desirable person. In what follows, I analyse ways in which participants hope to achieve the desired subjectivity through doing an OE.

### **Out of your comfort zone**

The discussion of the subjectivity that many young adults associate with doing an OE raises the question as to how they think the OE contributes to achieving it. A common discourse that occurred in interviews and online discussions suggests that the changes young adults envisage as part of their OE are related to leaving their '*comfort zone*' (Skye, Sina, Tom, Chris). Skye's statement exemplifies how many participants constitute the OE as a challenge to move out of one's comfort zone, which she considers to be essential for personal development:

*I think it really is sort of throwing yourself into a really different situation where you're sort of pulling yourself out of your comfort zone. (...) I also think it's [pause] um [pause] different to look after yourself. Like in that comes in feeling isolated from your family [pause] um [pause] being so far away and having to be in surroundings which are so different from what you know. (Skye, interviewee)*

Skye continued to explain how leaving the comfort zone contributes to personal development:

*You're proving to yourself that you are in this massive world (...) and you can be ok, no matter what situation you're put in. Um [pause] so if you need money, you get a job, if you're physically tired, you keep going, and if you're feeling insecure, you have to be in the strength to say that you won't adapt. [pause] I just think they are good qualities to have and you don't get them from staying in your comfort zone, which is being in your own country.*

According to Skye, leaving the comforts and security associated with home can be interpreted as pushing one's boundaries and facing challenges. This may support the development of qualities and characteristics, which she considers to be positive. Skye's talk indicates that these characteristics may not be accessed by staying in New Zealand. Similarly, an anonymous blogger indicated that the OE is an opportunity to improve through being out of the comfort zone:

*It's about expanding yourself. You are only going to get so far in your small home town surrounded by smaller home town minds. Sometimes you need your own space to be completely independent of your family and friends to learn what you want for yourself and more importantly, who you are, and not how you are defined by who your friends were in high school or what your parents do. In some ways, it can be scary when you don't have the same support network you've grown accustomed to - but you come to rely on yourself, and on your slightly altered support network. Comfort zones could lead to stagnation, or maybe it is that we seek out new comfort zones in foreign surroundings.*

This blogger suggests that 'scary things' young adults may experience during an OE are positive, as they show them what they are capable of doing. Going away is interpreted as an expansion of selves, whereas staying in comfort zones is judged as leading to stagnation. Yet, stagnation clearly contradicts the self-improvement and the maximisation of happiness and fulfilment that people generally aim for when working on themselves. The way in which the anonymous blogger refers to those who stay in their comfort zones as 'home town minds' supports the construction of subject positions associated with non-OE travellers discussed earlier. Marie, another blogger, interprets potential discomforts and fears as learning experiences and stated that '(i)t makes life worth living to confront fears and try new experiences'. Her focus on 'how much it [the OE] will teach us' indicates that she anticipates the OE as a self-improvement experience.

The decision to leave their comfort zones in order to expand their selves exemplifies how these participants work on the project of their selves. By constituting themselves as free actors who choose discomforts at times, they hope to become a more interesting, cosmopolitan, or competent person. They choose desirable discomforts as a way to make up themselves and transform in the direction of happiness as Rose (1996a) has suggested. This demonstrates that they live their lives as ‘entrepreneurs of themselves’ (Rose 1990: 226), assessing, judging, and adopting lifestyles and selves. Through identifying the OE as a means to achieve the characteristics they desire, it becomes a meaningful practice within society.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis offered in this chapter focused on young adults’ capacities to pursue an OE and the personality traits they associate with temporarily living and working elsewhere. The investigation of young adults’ capacities to do an OE illustrated that access to OE discourses is differentiated. More specifically, participation in OE discourses seems to be related to young adults’ engagement with other discursive practices, in particular those relating to different forms of tertiary education. The analysis indicated that capacities to participate in OE discourses seem to be concentrated in university students and graduates. Conversations relating to young adults’ life course suggest that temporarily living and working elsewhere has become a normal or integral element of the current life course of university students and graduates. For young adults studying and training at other tertiary education institutions than university, however, the OE may be less likely to be embraced as a desirable form of behaviour.

The analysis of young adults’ discourses relating to those who do and do not pursue an OE illustrated that those who position themselves as agents in OE discourses create meanings and shape the subject positions of OE and non-OE travellers. The way in which they attribute meaning to and differentiate themselves from those not participating in OE discourses allowed for assumptions regarding the forms of life they aspire to through doing an OE. The analysis illustrated how some of them use the OE to

work on the project of their selves and make up themselves in desired ways as adventurous, cosmopolitan, and more interesting people. Further, the analysis suggested that those who constitute themselves as OE travellers engage in the construction of what constitutes a desired subjectivity. In this respect, they can be considered as simultaneously constituted by and exercising the discursive power of the OE. The operation of power through them served to identify and reinforce subject positions.

As most participants indicate that they aim at self-improvement through being away for a limited period, their plans are consistent with the aspirations of governments, non-state organisations, and travel operators that set up opportunities to pursue an OE. The characteristics young adults hope to achieve, such as being global, well-travelled, and skilful align themselves with the subjectivity that these authorities aspire to when setting up the conditions for the OE as a temporary journey overseas.

## Chapter Seven: Conclusion

---

### Introduction

This thesis has argued that the New Zealand OE can be analysed productively as a form of what Nikolas Rose (1999) has referred to as governance through freedom. I analysed the OE against reflections on how people are simultaneously free and governed and illustrated how many young New Zealanders are disciplined by embracing the freedoms associated with the OE.

Inspired by Rose's approach to the constitution of subjects in modern liberal societies, I have offered an interpretation of the OE as a way in which young New Zealanders can pursue the project of their selves – how they can actively make up themselves as they desire. My research highlights ways in which power works through the OE, as those who embark on it make up themselves and choose freedoms. Interviews I conducted and online discussions on the OE blog indicated that young adults hope to become more adventurous and cosmopolitan through temporarily living and working elsewhere and to demonstrate that they are interested in the world beyond New Zealand, while also committed to coming home.

Conversations with New Zealanders as well as media representations relating to overseas work and travel indicate that the OE is considered as an opportunity for young adults to exercise choice and initiative, to explore other cultures, enhance skills, and expand horizons. Representation of the OE as an expression of self-exploration and self-development suggest that it is dominated by discourses of freedom. Yet, my research indicates that the freedom to do an OE is only possible because it is intentionally constructed by authorities, such as governments, travel agents, or employers. In this respect, the OE does not simply represent an opportunity for choice, initiative, and action, but operates as a way in which young New Zealanders are disciplined through choices they make and, what is more, through exercising their freedom to travel and work outside New Zealand. I have argued that forms of power operating through OE



discourses shape young New Zealanders' actions and, ultimately, their subjectivity as New Zealanders.

In this chapter, I identify the key themes emerging from my analysis of the OE and highlight ways in which it can be understood as a form of governance through freedom.

## **Key findings**

I was drawn to research on the OE because I was interested in the freedoms it provided for young New Zealanders in my age group. Post-structuralist social theory challenged me to see the OE not exclusively as an opportunity for freedom, but also as a field of rules, regulations, and constraints. A growing interest in how power operates with respect to the OE led to an analysis informed by Foucauldian ideas about power, freedom, and the constitution of subject positions. The work of Foucault and Nikolas Rose facilitated an analysis that simultaneously engaged with the OE as an opportunity for actively pursuing the project of the self and operating with respect to the constraints associated with a discursively constructed subject. Use of these theoretical ideas facilitated an analysis of the OE which demonstrates how young adults are governed through their choices, individuality, and resourcefulness – how they are governed through attributes associated with freedom.

Motivated by my desire to analyse both freedom and power relating to the OE and to explore how it potentially contributes to the constitution of young New Zealanders' identity, I investigated various discourses associated with the OE. This required a multifaceted research strategy which included textual analyses of existing documents and the generation of new information about young adults' OE plans, aspirations, and expectations. I began my research with an investigation of existing written and published accounts relating to tourism, overseas travel, and visa agreements. This was complemented by information gathered through interview conversations with young New Zealanders planning to embark on their OE, web-based discussions, and questionnaires, as well as many informal conversations, in part prompted by talk about my research project. Consistent with the theoretical approach employed, Foucauldian

discourse analysis has been used to analyse the material gathered through these investigations. This contributed to an exploration of the discursive field of the OE – the meanings, practices, interests, and regulations associated with this social phenomenon.

My analysis of the OE through a Foucauldian lens was a new way of looking at young New Zealanders' temporary movement overseas and encouraged me to investigate aspects of the OE that have not been addressed before, such as how power and freedom operate in OE discourses. Foucault and Rose understand power and freedom as not mutually exclusive, but simultaneous and intertwined. This enables them to examine constructions of selves and the social processes by which people become subjects in advanced liberal societies through a variety of social practices. I use their ideas to explore the complexity of the OE as simultaneously offering freedom and regulating the behaviour of young New Zealanders; to be precise, to examine how it is discursively constructed as a life course experience through which young adults are enabled to act and shaped at the same time. Using these theoretical ideas also contributed to an analysis of the OE as an illustration of how the project of the self is pursued in a New Zealand context.

Rose's approach of governance through freedom draws on the idea that people in modern liberal societies are not governed through overt control or discipline, but through acting on the freedom possible in their social contexts. Rose (1999) states such governing takes place through shaping the aspirations and needs of free citizens. It is achieved by generating alignments between what he refers to as ruling institutions, independent authorities, and personal aspirations. These alignments are generated effectively when people embrace forms of behaviour as chosen that are consistent with intentions and interests of state and non-state authorities. My project has been to illustrate alignments between ruling institutions, such as governments of modern liberal democracies, in particular the New Zealand Government, independent authorities, such as commercial operators associated with the tourism industry, New Zealand universities, or the RSA, and young adults' social construction of the OE as a practice in New Zealand. Through this, I showed various ways in which the OE operates as a form of governance through freedom.

## **Fields of possibilities associated with the OE**

The New Zealand OE is defined by discourses of freedom. Yet, this freedom is very specific and gets precisely laid out through discourses that constitute fields of possibilities. Various discourses associated with the OE constitute these fields of possibilities and make a range of options regarding overseas work and travel available to young New Zealanders. Young adults are both enabled to act and simultaneously defined through the range of possible actions that constitute the OE. Thus, while feeling free to choose, they experience the constraining effects of power operating through the discourses that construct their freedom to embark on an OE.

Through my investigations, it became apparent that ruling institutions and independent authorities construct opportunities and set boundaries for actions associated with the OE. To investigate how opportunities for OE travel are formally set up, I looked at different international agreements that enable young adults to temporarily live and work elsewhere. I illustrated that the New Zealand Government occupies a central position regarding OE travel as they directly negotiate agreements that enable their young citizens to travel and take up paid work elsewhere. In particular, working holiday agreements were shown to be crucial for many young New Zealanders planning to go away for their OE. Through establishing working holiday agreements, various governments around the world actively enable their 18 to 30 year-old citizens to spend an extended period living and working in another country. These agreements offer young adults opportunities to act and simultaneously set limits for their actions. Following Rose's approach, I argued that they offer young New Zealanders the opportunity to pursue an OE 'under the conditions that systematically limit their capacities' (Rose 1996a: 17). Formal regulations relating to overseas travel and work clearly set conditions on, for instance, employment opportunities overseas or the length of time of a working holiday visa.<sup>54</sup> In this way, the formal regulations define the range of opportunities available to young New Zealanders and shape the possible actions from which they can choose. Thus, the rules and regulations associated with overseas travel are the source of both the freedom to act and constraints on action.

---

<sup>54</sup> These conditions have been discussed in Chapter Four and were explicitly outlined on page 64.

The analysis of the regulatory context of migration and travel as the frame that both enables and restricts the OE illustrated how governments exercise a capacity to regulate the movement of citizens across international boundaries. Anyone who wants to live and work outside their home country has to consider and respect these regulations. This illustrates that people are only free within sets of intertwined regulations. My interviews with young New Zealanders planning to do an OE, however, indicated that they do not consider themselves as restricted in their options to freely choose where to go and how long to stay at a chosen destination. They articulated thoughts about the OE as '*so much freedom*' (Chris) and indicated their expectation to have unlimited opportunities while away. Yet, their ways of planning and pursuing their OE were consistent with the regulatory framework set up by state actors. Most planned to be away for about two to three years, which is consistent with the working holiday arrangements between New Zealand and the UK. To extend their stay, for instance, in Europe, some participants planned to obtain working holiday visas for more than one country. Yet, for them, this plan was not due to the regulations associated with the visa but to their desire to experience life in a variety of countries. Furthermore, most seemed prepared to take up employment outside their professional field. While they considered this as a freely chosen break from their profession, it is consistent with governments' intentions for implementing working holiday agreements such as attracting additional workforce for particular industries during peak seasons. Overall, the discussion of young adults' plans and ideas in relation to the regulatory framework illustrated that they imagine themselves as free as they are governed.

The analysis of boundary definitions by governing authorities also included the actions of various non-state actors or, to use Rose's terminology (1999: 49) 'independent authorities'. My investigations of independent authorities associated with the OE included the tourism industry, tertiary education institutions, and the Returned and Services' Association (RSA). Each of these authorities shapes young New Zealanders' opportunities to do an OE in specific ways, driven by their particular interests, aims, and social imaginaries. Commercial operators associated with the tourism industry, for instance, assist young adults in very precise ways through offering specific OE packages. They present themselves as keen to give young adults the opportunity to

experience the diverse travel opportunities the world offers and, moreover, to become well-travelled, cosmopolitan people. New Zealand universities promote the possibilities to study worldwide and offer study abroad and exchange programmes for young adults. Through this, they facilitate international exchange and encourage their students to engage with the global knowledge society. Lastly, I investigated ways in which the RSA shapes meanings of the OE and possibly generates acceptance towards it. They include the OE in their ANZAC campaign to retrospectively interpret young New Zealanders' engagement in the world wars as a version of an OE. Through this, they shape and reshape meanings associated with the OE and utilize it to characterise New Zealand identity.<sup>55</sup>

I illustrated that independent authorities construct potential New Zealand subjects that orientate themselves globally and represent New Zealand in international contexts such as the global economy or knowledge society. Through the services they offer, they support young New Zealanders in becoming well-travelled, cosmopolitan, and globally aware citizens. This aligns itself with the formal framework of overseas travel initiated by the New Zealand Government through which young adults achieve the opportunity to travel freely and legally as good New Zealand citizens. Overall, these various authorities enable young New Zealanders to make up themselves as those who both want to leave and simultaneously assert their connections to New Zealand, for instance, by including a visit to ANZAC Cove in their OE itinerary.

I have demonstrated that the range of possible actions associated with OE travel is constructed by various authorities – governments, non-state organisations, commercial and non-profit travel operators. The analysis indicated that OE discourses articulated by these authorities exert power effects on young New Zealanders. I interpreted these discourses as not only constructing opportunities for actions for young adults planning their OE, but as simultaneously constraining. Possible choices and actions are limited to the fields of possibilities set up by authorities. Thus, freely choosing to do an OE entails

---

<sup>55</sup> Ways in which commercial operators, universities, and the RSA set up and shape the fields of possibilities have been discussed on pages 73 – 84 of this thesis.

acting within a range of possible actions, which both makes the OE possible and simultaneously governs the subjects who embark on it.

### **OE – finitude and freedom**

After analysing how governments and various non-state authorities formally constitute opportunities to pursue an OE through setting up a range of possible actions, I investigated how this range of actions is shaped more precisely through the key features and specific practices associated with the OE, meanings and values attached to it, and young adults' perception of these features. What participants articulated about the OE indicated that doing an OE is not only enabled and restricted by the fields of possible actions set up by authorities, but also tied to particular characteristics, meanings, and practices linked to the imaginary of the OE. I summarised this as conditions for possible actions and used the analysis of the OE as a finite experience to illustrate how young adults' actions and opportunities are shaped by them.

While the OE is framed as the freedom to travel and work elsewhere and in this sense open-ended, it is also crucially constructed as a limited time period. Conversations with young adults planning to do an OE as well as online discussions indicated that finitude is a key feature of the OE. To investigate the finite character of the OE, I analysed various aspects relating to and facilitating the OE as a temporary period overseas, such as young adults' perception of it as a time out, their conceptions of New Zealand and elsewhere, and their preparation for a limited time away. Analysing these aspects illustrated in different ways how participants have embraced the finite character of the OE in their plans. Their talk about New Zealand as home, their positive appreciation for it, and their plans regarding settling and raising a family indicated that the freedom to do an OE is closely related to the anticipation of returning to New Zealand. Based on my participants' positive anticipation to come back to New Zealand, I have argued that the prospect of returning to New Zealand partly facilitates the possibility of leaving.

Interviewees and bloggers articulated their intention to leave New Zealand, as it is experienced as small, geographically isolated, or even '*boring*' (Ruby). At the same time, they expressed their appreciation for their home country and planned to return to

settle and raise families. Discussions about returning to New Zealand were particularly revealing as they indicated that participants imagined themselves as empowered and free people, while taking on the position of an OE traveller as a returnee constituted by, for instance, rules and regulations. The interviewees and bloggers indicated that they considered it to be their personal choice to return to New Zealand. The way in which they imagined themselves as choosing to return after experiencing other places illustrated that they use the OE to make up themselves and construct stories about their own lives. In these respects, they simultaneously constitute themselves as international travellers and returnees, interested in the world beyond New Zealand, while not denigrating New Zealand, but anticipating a life narrative that entails coming back.

While participants articulated their plans to go away temporarily, the time of their return was not set before leaving New Zealand, but flexible. Some participants expressed their expectation to return at a time when they feel like coming back. Again, this signals that they imagine the time of their return as their choice. However, my analysis has illustrated that this choice is shaped by conditions defined by various OE discourses such as the regulatory framework of overseas travel. Rules and regulations enable young adults to leave and also constitute the OE traveller as returning to New Zealand. By taking on the position of a returnee and acting in ways that are consistent with the finite character, young adults simultaneously engage in the constitution of this position and reinforce the notion of the OE as finite.

A focus on the OE as a finite experience illustrates how freedom works as a means to ensure that people conduct themselves in desired ways. Young adults have opportunities to leave New Zealand; they can embark on their OE to live and work elsewhere for a while. Yet, there are constraints on the time they can stay overseas and the freedoms associated with the OE can only be achieved when they embrace these constraints such as the finite character. These time constraints are, for instance, defined through the working holiday visa. Those planning to pursue their OE through a working holiday visa – as most participants of this study – are allowed to stay in those countries that signed the reciprocal agreement for one or, with respect to the UK, two years. Some countries also define conditions for the time working holiday makers can take up paid work. In the UK, for instance, they are allowed to work for twelve months out of the

two years they are allowed to stay. Most working holiday schemes also define 30 as the ultimate age limit for working holiday makers. This places constraints on those New Zealanders' opportunities to pursue an OE that have passed the age limit. The participants' talk, however, indicated that they do not focus on these constraints but on the anticipated pleasure in freely choosing to return to New Zealand. The way in which they imagine themselves as choosing their return shows that the regulations that make the OE possible effectively govern the movement of free citizens through offering them freedom.

### **Capacities to do an OE and subject positions**

OE discourses suggest that overseas work and travel is accessible to every young adult in New Zealand. An analysing of what young adults have to be and do to be able to go on an OE, however, has indicated that doing an OE is not equally achievable for everyone. It became apparent that the OE is projected as a travel activity for everyone, but more available to some young adults than others.

In the discussion of young adults' capacities to do an OE, I indicated that there are various sets of understandings regarding the OE as a normal course of action among young adults involved in different forms of training and education. Participating university students and graduates talked about the OE as the '*norm*' (Chris, Oliver) or the '*normal*' (Thomas) thing to do within their social networks. Yet, difficulties of approaching students at other tertiary education institutions to participate in this study demonstrated that not all young adults consider themselves as potential OE travellers and thus, positioned to be governed by the freedom to do an OE. I illustrated this through the experiences of my attempts to recruit participants at the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology (CPIT). When approaching CPIT students to participate, some of them clearly expressed their resistance to the OE. Their reactions indicated that they imagined themselves as part of a social world that does not include doing an OE. Instead, they took up the position of a non-OE traveller and acted accordingly. When approaching them and mentioning the OE, they instantly knew what I was talking about. They knew about the OE as a travel activity and also seemed to be aware of its seductions and freedoms; yet, they constituted themselves as people with



other priorities and constraints. They indicated their lack of financial funds and articulated that they were '*poor*' (anonymous CPIT student) and could not afford to go overseas – at the same time, they explicitly emphasized their position as CPIT students as if this was self-explanatory for not participating in OE discourses. Instead of travelling overseas for an extended period, those CPIT students I approached articulated their plans to take up paid employment and earn money after finishing their education. Their reactions indicated that they have chosen this as a priority over overseas travel for themselves.

Difficulties in recruiting participants and reactions I experienced indicated that access to participate in OE discourses is differentiated. I interpreted this as an example of the multiplicity of networks of power associated with the OE and concluded that young adults' opportunities to do an OE are related to their engagement with and participation in other discursive practices, in particular those relating to different facets of tertiary education. Being involved in university studies seems to be linked to capacities and opportunities for actions that are not perceived to be equally available to students at other tertiary education institutions, such as CPIT. For university students, doing an OE seems to be largely normalised, while CPIT students' reactions indicated that it is not considered as a normal course of action for them. Engagement with different tertiary institutions – universities, polytechnics, and private providers – may also be related to class and life stage factors that have an independent effect on whether young adults see themselves as potentially doing an OE. Sole parents in their mid-twenties doing short courses, for instance, may not see the OE as at all available to them. Yet, this is only speculative and derived from other findings as I did not talk to, for instance, sole parents.

Those participants involved in university studies articulated thoughts about the OE as the norm, something that everyone in the circle of friends does. Yet, it was important that those young adults planning to pursue their OE did not see it as expected. The analysis in Chapter Six indicated that they seek to travel not in order to conform to norms or act in expected ways, but to fulfil their own aspirations. Interviewees and bloggers emphasized that their decisions to embark on an OE was entirely personal and not a response to peer pressure. They considered and constituted themselves as actively,

independently and freely choosing to do an OE. While they stressed that the OE is not expected, they considered it as a way of demonstrating certain personal qualities and engaged in the construction of freedom as an aspiration for young educated New Zealanders. As those planning to do an OE pursue their own interest, they hope to achieve certain qualities, such as being able to look after oneself, independence, adventurousness, activity, and enthusiasm. This illustrates that the OE offers them the opportunity to work on their selves and make up themselves according to their own desires and aspirations. This is both highly personal and a product of generalised understandings about the OE.

Rose and Foucault argue that one effect of discourse is the production of subjects who demonstrate modes of subjectivity that align with institutional goals. While discourses encourage people to take up those forms of behaviour that are considered desirable, they constrain them from taking up other modes of being that are associated with less desirable behaviour. The analysis offered in Chapter Six has indicated that OE discourses seem to define the ideal way of being a young person in New Zealand as exercising initiative and choice and anticipating the freedoms associated with the OE. OE discourses construct this subject position and represent it as potentially achievable through doing an OE. The interviewees indicated that they have adopted the idea of achieving certain qualities through doing an OE. In talk about young adults who choose not to do an OE, the interviewees articulated opinions of them as not interested in the world, '*shy*' and '*quiet*' (Victoria), or even '*narrow minded*' (Ruby), and not as '*complete*' or '*stable*' (Skye) as those who are planning to travel on an OE. They differentiated themselves from these people and anticipated the OE as a way to demonstrate that they were different and more interesting. Rose (1996a) has argued that people in advanced liberal democracies are continuously working on the project of their selves, making up themselves and shaping an autonomous identity through their lifestyle choices. This thesis has offered an interpretation of the OE as a way for young New Zealanders to actively make up themselves as adventurous, choosing, energetic selves, interested in global experiences while also committed to New Zealand. For those planning to do an OE, these qualities characterise an improved quality of life and thus, 'maximize the worth of their existence to themselves' (Rose 1996a: 158).

The analysis of leaving the comfort zone in order to improve and expand their selves showed specific ways in which young adults planning to do an OE work on the project of their selves.<sup>56</sup> The interviewees and bloggers suggested that doing an OE means leaving the comforts and security of home, which some of them interpreted as pushing their boundaries and challenging themselves. Doing an OE offers them the opportunity to demonstrate that they sometimes choose desirable discomforts as a way to develop characteristics that they consider as valuable, such as learning to cope with different surroundings or developing strength through feeling insecure and having to face the unknown. Accordingly, I interpreted those choosing to leave their comfort zones in order to expand and develop their selves as living their lives as what Rose (1996a: 158) has called ‘entrepreneurs of themselves’.

The analysis in Chapter Six has indicated that OE discourses construct the active individual as choosing, deciding, and controlling. Interviewees, questionnaire respondents, and bloggers indicated that they choose where to go, what to do, and when to return. I illustrated that they are enabled to do so as long as they act within the fields of possible actions associated with the OE. They are constituted and constitute themselves as OE travellers who aim to gain character building qualities and specific personality traits that they consider to be positive. As the OE offers young adults an opportunity to develop desirable qualities, it contributes to the development of their identity. I interpreted the freedom to make up themselves in desired ways as governance at a distance: as young adults constitute themselves as free agents, they are also governed.

## **Assessing the contribution of this research**

As indicated earlier, existing research and analyses of the OE as a social institution in New Zealand are scarce. Furthermore, most of the research that has been done addresses economic, monetary, and financial matters associated with young adults’ travel and work outside New Zealand. Kerr Inkson, for instance, described the OE as important for broadening perspectives and knowledge and increasing cultural awareness. However, he

---

<sup>56</sup> This analysis was offered on pages 126 – 132 in this thesis.

has been predominantly interested in how the skills and qualities associated with the OE have a beneficial effect on the careers of young adults when they return and, moreover, how those who have been on an OE contribute to the New Zealand economy (Inkson et al. 1997, Inkson et al. 1999).

This research has shown that the OE is not only undertaken for career benefits. Rather, it represents an opportunity for young New Zealanders to work on themselves as they explore the world and gain work experience. The opportunity to develop qualities that do not only add to their personal and professional competencies, but also shape their identity and enhance their personal being was cited as a key reason for embarking on an OE by those who participated in this study. The OE may not be financially beneficial – yet, it is still powerful as it offers opportunities to work on the project of the self. This seems to be more important to most participants than pure monetary incentives or improved career prospects on their return to New Zealand. As the OE offers young adults the opportunity to actively constitute themselves in desired ways, this analysis opens up new ways of thinking about the constitution of New Zealand identity and, moreover, exemplifies different ways of thinking about power. The analysis presented in this thesis draws on complex ways of thinking about power and how it works in other forms than overt control, domination, and repression. I illustrated ways in which power is done through people freely choosing and that it is through the pursuit of the making up oneself in desired ways that the OE becomes a powerful social practice.

This research has highlighted how discourses of freedom are manifest within the New Zealand society and how governance occurs through the promise of freedom and choice. Through applying Rose's concept of governance through freedom to the analysis of the OE, I have illustrated how governments and non-state actors such as travel agents construct freedom for young New Zealand citizens and how they can be governed through this freedom at the same time. This research illustrates some ways in which young adults aspire to freedom and hope to work on themselves by doing an OE. Some of these ideas could find applications in attempts by New Zealand governments to attract young adults back to New Zealand. I have indicated that, while the OE is constructed as a temporary movement elsewhere, many New Zealanders do not return, but stay overseas, in particular when they find ongoing jobs in other contexts. Issues

around educated young New Zealanders deciding to permanently live and work overseas and the consequences for the New Zealand economy have been addressed in discussions around Brain Drain (Carr et al 2005, Inkson et al 2006, Glass & Choy 2001). As a result of this development, the New Zealand Government sets incentives for young adults currently on their OE to return and, for those planning to go away, to postpone their journey and contribute to the New Zealand economy. One of their current programmes is the policy regarding the interest on student loans, which gets written off if people spend a certain amount of time in New Zealand (Inland Revenue). However, my research suggests that as financial incentives are not necessarily the most effective ways to attract young adults to stay in or come back to New Zealand, for these programmes to be fruitful, they have to embrace and reflect the importance of discourses of freedom. Thus, effective incentives for young adults to return may be those that preserve freedom for them to move between New Zealand and elsewhere. The Government could, for instance, offer programmes that encourage young adults to come back. This research indicates that these programmes are likely to be most successful if they preserved the possibility of freely choosing to leave again. This is consistent with the development of an increasingly globalised workforce (Beck 1999).

## **Concluding remarks**

This thesis has demonstrated that OE discourses set up fields of possibilities and conditions of doing an OE that define the space of possible actions within which young New Zealanders have the opportunity to be free agents and pursue an OE as a chosen course of action. My exploration of various discourses associated with the OE indicates that the power of the OE seems to be its capacity to make young New Zealanders experience themselves as empowered agents, freely choosing to travel overseas, and pursuing the life course they have chosen. While empowering young adults, OE discourses also guide their conduct by defining conditions of possible actions. Thus, OE discourses can be interpreted as having both enabling and constraining effects: they create opportunities to act and simultaneously control and guide young adults' temporary movement elsewhere.

Employing theoretical ideas around governance through freedom has enabled me to evaluate the OE as relevant to the constitution of subjects. The analysis illustrated how OE discourses inscribe and foster particular ways of being a New Zealand citizen, moreover, of being a free and normal New Zealand citizen. OE discourses enable young adults to take on a particular subject position and to constitute themselves as OE travellers.

The analysis conducted in this thesis has illustrated that the OE offers young adults the opportunity to simultaneously experience freedom, power, and choice as they engage in an institutionalised activity. In conclusion, this research suggests that it makes sense to analyse the OE as an example of governance through freedom in New Zealand.

## References

---

- Beck, U.** (1999) *Schöne neue Arbeitswelt*. Frankfurt am Main, Campus Verlag.
- Beck, U., & E. Beck-Gernsheim** (2002) *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and its Social and Political Consequences*. London, Sage Publications.
- Bedford, R.** (2001) Reflections on the Spatial Odysseys of New Zealanders. In: *New Zealand Geographer*. Vol. 57, No. 1, pp. 49 – 62.
- Berry, R.** (2006) Tony Blair confirms NZ stopover. In: *The New Zealand Herald*. Auckland. 14.03.2006
- Bertaux, D., & I. Bertaux-Wiame** (1981) Life Stories in the Baker's trade. In: Bertaux, D. (Ed.) *Biography and Society. The Life Story Approach in the Social Sciences*. Beverly Hills, California, Sage Publications.
- Bloom, D.E.** (2004) Globalization and Education: An economic Perspective. In: Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard (2004), pp. 56-77.
- Bryant, J., & D. Law** (2004) *New Zealand's Diaspora and Overseas-Born Population*. New Zealand Treasury Working Paper 04/ 13, Wellington, New Zealand Treasury.
- Burr, V.** (1995) *An Introduction of Social Constructionism*. London & New York, Routledge.
- Burr, V.** (2002) *The Person in Social Psychology*. New York, Psychology Press.
- Burr, V.** (2003) *Social Constructionism*. London & New York, Routledge.
- Buzard, J.** (2002) The Grand Tour and after (1660 – 1840). In: Hulme, J., & T. Youngs (Eds.) (2002) *The Cambridge Companion to travel writing*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 37 – 52.
- Capie, D., & G. McGhie** (2005) Representing New Zealand: Identity, Diplomacy and the Making of Foreign Policy. In: Liu [et al.] (Eds.) (2005), pp. 230 – 241.
- Carr, S., K. Inkson, & K. Thorn** (2005) From global careers to talent flow. Reinterpreting 'brain drain'. In: *Journal of World Business*, Vol. 40, No. 40, pp. 386 – 398.

- Carter, B.** (2005) Britain hobbles OE workers. In: *The New Zealand Herald*. Auckland. 09.02.2005.
- Cohen, D.** (2005) Should I stay or should I go? In: *New Zealand Listener*. 2005, June 11 - 17, Vol. 100, No. 3396, pp. 15 – 17.
- Collins, S.** (2001) Expats Spread Far and Wide, Not Thin. In: *The New Zealand Herald*. Auckland. 15.12.2001.
- Collins, S.** (2005) Quarter of New Zealand's brightest are gone. In: *The New Zealand Herald*. Auckland. 12.03.2005
- Davidson, C., & M. Tolich** (2003) *Social Science Research in New Zealand: Many Paths to Understanding*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Auckland, Pearson Education New Zealand.
- Dreyfus, H.L., & P. Rabinow** (1982) *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Brighton, Harvester Press.
- Dumont, J.C., & G. Lemaitre** (2005) *Counting Immigrants and Expatriates in OECD countries: a new perspective*. OECD, Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers. Paris, OECD Head of Publications Service.
- Elliott, M.** (2002) Must the backpackers stay home? In: *Time*. 16.12.2002, p. 27.
- Foucault, M.** (1972) *The archaeology of knowledge*. London, Tavistock Publications.
- Foucault, M.** (1978) *The History of Sexuality. Vol. 1: Introduction*. New York, Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M.** (edited by C. Gordon) (1980) *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972 – 1977*. New York, Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M.** (1982) Afterword. The Subjects and Power. In: Dreyfus & Rabinow (1982), pp. 208 – 226.
- Foucault, M.** (1991) Governmentality. In: Burchell, G., C. Gordon, & P. Miller (Eds.) *The Foucault effect: studies in governmentality: with two lectures by and an interview with Michel Foucault*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press. pp. 87 – 104.
- Foucault, M.** (1995) *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, New York, Vintage Books.
- Fussell, P.** (1987) The Eighteenth Century and the Grand Tour. In: Fussell, P. (Ed.) (1987) *The Norton Book of Travel*. New York & London, Norton & Company. pp. 127 – 268.



- Frean, A.** (2006) Gap years create 'new colonialists'. In: *The Times*. 15.08.2006
- Giddens, A.** (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Giddens, A.** (1995) *Politics, Sociology and Social Theory: Encounters with Classical and Contemporary Social Thought*. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Giddens, A.** (1999) Elements of the Theory of Structuration. In: *The Blackwell reader in contemporary social theory*. Ed. A. Elliott. Malden, Massachusetts & Oxford, Blackwell. pp. 119 – 130.
- Glass, H., & W.K. Choy** (2001) *Brain Drain or Brain Exchange*. Treasury Working Paper 01/ 22. New Zealand Treasury, Wellington.
- Grey, C.** (1994) Career as a Project of the Self and Labour Process Discipline. In: *Sociology*. Journal of the British Sociological Association. Vol. 28, No. 2, May 1994, pp. 479 – 497.
- Hall, S.** (2001) Foucault: Power, Knowledge and Discourse. In: Wetherell [et al.] (2001), pp. 72 – 81.
- Hall, C.M., & S.J. Page** (2006) *The geography of tourism and recreation: environment, place, and space*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. London & New York, Routledge.
- Held, D. & A.G. McGrew** (2004) *The Global Transformation Reader: an introduction to the globalization debate*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Hutchinson, V., & D. Owens** (Eds.) (2003) UK relaxes "Big OE" Visa Criteria. In: *The Jobs Letter. Essential Information on an Essential Issue*. No. 184, 02.05.2003.
- Inkson, K., M.B. Arthur, J. Pringle, & S. Barry** (1997) Expatriate Assignment versus Overseas Experience: Contrasting Models of International Human Resource Development. In: *Journal of World Business*. 1997, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp. 351 – 368.
- Inkson, K., D.C. Thomas, & S.H. Barry** (1999) Overseas Experience: Increasing individual and national competitiveness. In: *University of Auckland Business Review*. 1999, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 52 – 61.
- Inkson, K., & B. Myers** (2003) "The Big OE": self-directed travel and career development. In: *Career Development International*, Vol. 8. No. 4, pp. 170 – 181.

- Inkson, K., S. Carr, M. Edwards, J. Hooks, D. Jackson, K. Thorn, & N. Allfree** (2006) From Brain Drain to Talent Flow: Views of Kiwi Expatriates. In: *University of Auckland Business Review*. 2006, Vol.6, No. 2, pp. 29 – 39.
- International Exchange Programs IEP**, *working adventures worldwide 2005. Work/Travel Overseas*, IEP Travel Brochure.
- Jacobs, K.** (2006) Discourse Analysis. In: Walter (Ed.) (2006), pp. 135 – 158.
- Jemmet, A. (Ed)** (2005) Unpacking essence of the Kiwi ‘Overseas Experience’. In: *Outlook 2005*. Lincoln, Lincoln University. pp. 24 – 25.
- Jones, A.** (2004) *Review of Gap Year Provision*. Research Report for the Department for Education and Skills. London, University of London.
- Lemke, T.** (2002) Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique. In: *Rethinking Marxism*. Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 49 – 64.
- Liu, J.H., T. McCreanor, T. McIntosh, & T. Teaiwa** (2005) *New Zealand Identities: departures and destinations*. Wellington, Victoria University Press.
- Lukes, S.** (2005) *Power. A radical view*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lunt, N., M. McPherson, & J. Browning** (2006) *Les Familles et Whānau sans Frontières: New Zealand and Transnational Family Obligation*. Blue Skies Report No 1/06, Families Commission, Wellington.
- Manzoor, S.** (2004) Work in a gap year? Give me a break. In: *Guardian*. Manchester, Guardian News and Media Limited. 11.08.2004.
- McCarter, N. (Ed.)** (2001) *The Big OE: tales from New Zealand Travellers*. Auckland, Tandem Press.
- McGibbon, I. C. (Ed.)** (2000) *The Oxford Companion to New Zealand military history*. Oxford & New York, Oxford University Press.
- McHoul, A.W., & W. Grace** (1997) *A Foucault Primer: discourse, power and the subject*. New York, University Press.
- McLean, J.** (2002) *Guide for New Zealand traveller in Britain*. London, Winter Productions.
- McManus, R.** (2005) Freedom and Suicide: A Genealogy of Suicide Regulation in New Zealand 1840 – 2000. In: *Journal of Historical Sociology*. Vol. 18, No. 4, pp. 430 – 456.
- Mulgan, J.** (1984) *Report on Experience*. Oxford University Press: Auckland

- Myers, B., & K. Inkson** (2003) The Big OE. How it works and what it can do for New Zealand. In: *University of Auckland Business Review*. 2003, Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 44 – 54.
- Pearson, D.** (2005) Citizenship, Identity and Belonging: Addressing the Mythologies of the Unitary Nation State in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In: Liu [et al] (2005), pp. 21 – 37.
- Rifkin, J.** (2002) *Das Ende der Arbeit und ihre Zukunft*. Frankfurt a. M., Fischer Verlag.
- Rose, N.** (1990) *Governing the soul: the shaping of the private self*. London & New York, Routledge.
- Rose, N.** (1996a) *Inventing our selves: psychology, power and personhood*. Cambridge, University Press.
- Rose, N.** (1996b) Governing ‘advanced’ liberal democracies. In: Barry, A., T. Osborne, & N. Rose (Eds.) (1996) *Foucault and political reason: liberalism, neo-liberalism and rationalities of government*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Rose, N.** (1999) *Powers of freedom. Reframing political thought*. Cambridge, University Press.
- Sell, B.** (2004) *The Big OE Companion. A guide for New Zealanders in the UK*. Auckland, Random House New Zealand.
- Shaw, T. (Ed.)** (1998) *A Passion for Travel. New Zealand Writers and their Adventures Overseas*. Auckland, Tandem Press.
- Shepherd, J.** (2007) The price of a year out. In: *Guardian*. Manchester, Guardian News and Media Limited. 09.01.2007.
- Simpson, K.** (2005) Dropping Out or Signing Up? The Professionalisation of Youth Travel. In: *Antipode*, Vol. 37, No. 3, June 2005, pp. 447 – 469.
- STA Travel**, *Define your own OE*, STA Travel Brochure.
- Statistics New Zealand** (2005) *Tourism and Migration Statistics 2005*. Statistics New Zealand, Wellington.
- Stephen, S.** (2002) Australia – NZ agreement highlights hypocrisy on refugees. In: *Green Left Weekly*. Issue # 486, 27.03.2002.
- Suarez- Orozco, C.** (2004) Identity in a globalized World. In: Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard (Eds.) (2004), pp. 173 -202.

- Suarez-Orozco, M.M., & D.B. Qin-Hilliard** (Eds.) (2004) *Globalization. Culture and Education in the new Millenium*. Berkely & Los Angeles, University of California Press.
- Taylor, C.** (2004) *Modern Social Imaginaries*. Durham & London, Duke University Press.
- Urry, J.** (2002) *The Tourist Gaze*. London, Sage Publications.
- Walter, M.** (Ed.) (2006) *Social research methods: an Australian perspective*. South Melbourne, Oxford University Press.
- Walter, M.** (2006a) The Nature of Social Science Research. In: Walter, M. (Ed.) (2006), pp. 1 – 28.
- Walter, M.** (2006b) Surveys and Sampling. In: Walter, M. (Ed.) (2006), pp. 187 – 222.
- Watkin, T.** (2005) Not so lucky. In: *New Zealand Listener*. 2005, September 3 – 9, Vol. 200, No. 3408, pp. 14 – 21.
- Weber, M.** (1922) *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. Tübingen, Mohr.
- Weber, M.** (1968) *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. New York, Bedminster Press.
- Wetherell, M., S. Taylor, & S.J. Yates** (Eds.) (2001) *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*. London, Sage Publications.
- YHA New Zealand** (1997) *Big OE Guide*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Christchurch, Youth Hostels Association of New Zealand.

## Electronic resources

- Bedford, R.** (2003) *Country Profiles. New Zealand: The Politicization of Immigration*, Available: [<http://www.migrationinformation.org/Profiles/display.cfm?ID=86>] (accessed 19.03.2007)
- British High Commission New Zealand, UK Ancestry & Grandparent**, Available: [<http://www.britishhighcommission.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1087554497895>] (accessed 20.03.2006)
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government, New Zealand Country Brief – February 2007**, Available:

[[http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/new\\_zealand/nz\\_country\\_brief.html](http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/new_zealand/nz_country_brief.html)] (accessed 31.10.2006)

**Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Australian Government, *Fact Sheet***

*17. New Zealanders in Australia.* Available:

[<http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/17nz.htm>] (accessed 29.05.2006)

**German Embassy Wellington, German Government, *Working Holiday and Visa***

*Requirements,* Available:

[[http://www.wellington.diplo.de/Vertretung/wellington/en/04/Working\\_20Holiday\\_20and\\_20Visa\\_20Requirements/Working\\_20Holiday\\_20and\\_20Visa\\_20Requirements.html](http://www.wellington.diplo.de/Vertretung/wellington/en/04/Working_20Holiday_20and_20Visa_20Requirements/Working_20Holiday_20and_20Visa_20Requirements.html)] (accessed 24.05.2006)

**Hutchinson, V., & D. Owens (Eds.) (2003) *The Jobs Letter. Essential Information on an Essential Issue. No. 184,*** Available:

[<http://www.jobsletter.org.nz/jbl18400.htm>] (accessed 15.03.2007)

**Inland Revenue, New Zealand Government, *Student loans,*** Available

[<http://www.ird.govt.nz/studentloans/about/eligibility-int-free/>] (accessed 20.03.2007)

**International Exchange Programs IEP, *working adventures worldwide,*** Available:

[<http://www.iep.co.nz/index.aspx>] (accessed 13.01.2007)

**KEA New Zealand, Kiwi Expat Association, *One million Kiwis missing!,*** Available:

[<http://www.keanewzealand.com/news/nzarticlew.html?componentid=1301308>] (accessed 15.03.2007)

**Korea Working Holiday, *About Working Holiday,*** Available:

[[http://www.workingholiday.or.kr/working-eng/sub1\\_1.asp](http://www.workingholiday.or.kr/working-eng/sub1_1.asp)] (accessed 24.05.2006)

**Massey University, *Take your study on an OE. Student Exchange Programme,***

Available: [<http://studentexchange.massey.ac.nz/>] (accessed 17.03.2007)

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan a, Japanese Government, *Japan – New***

*Zealand Relations,* Available: [<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/nz/index.html>] (accessed 25.05.2006)

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan b, Japanese Government, *About the JET***

*Programme,* Available: [[http://www.mofa.go.jp/j\\_info/visit/jet/outline.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/j_info/visit/jet/outline.html)] (accessed 25.05.2006)

**Ministry of Culture and Heritage, New Zealand Government, *Ninety Years Since Anzac Landings***, Available:

[<http://www.mch.govt.nz/publications/newsletter/july-05/anzac.html>] (accessed 27.11.2006)

**New Zealand Embassy Tokyo, New Zealand Government, *Working In Japan***, Available:

[<http://www.nzembassy.com/info.cfm?c=17&l=59&CFID=532362&CFTOKEN=5832&s=bu&p=60446>] (accessed 24.05.2006)

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand Government, *Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement (TTTA)***, Available: [<http://www.mfat.govt.nz/Foreign-Relations/Australia/0-trans-tasman-travel.php>] (accessed 13.06.2006)

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand Government *Country relations, Working Holiday Schemes***, Available: [<http://www.mfat.govt.nz/Countries/index.php>] (accessed 20.03.2007)

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand Government, *Relations with New Zealand. Tourism and Investment***, Available [<http://www.mfat.govt.nz/foreign/regions/Europe/countrypapers/uk.html>] (accessed 19.06.2006)

**Ministry of Tourism, New Zealand Government, *Access to NZ***, Available: [<http://www.tourism.govt.nz/policy/pol-accessnz.html>] (accessed 03.11.2006)

**New Zealand High Commission London, New Zealand Government, *Proposed changes to UK Immigration Regulations***, Available: [<http://nzembassy.com/news.cfm?c=14&l=56&CFID=79474&CFTOKEN=38261113&i=1535>] (25.05.2006)

**New Zealand Treasury, New Zealand Government**, Available: [<http://www.treasury.govt.nz/>] (accessed 17.02.2007)

**RSA a, Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association, *ANZAC Day***, Available: [[http://www.rsa.org.nz/remem/anzac\\_intro.html](http://www.rsa.org.nz/remem/anzac_intro.html)] (accessed 12.10.2006)

**RSA b, Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association, *ANZAC Day 2007. A guide for New Zealanders to ANZAC Day 2007 in New Zealand and around the world***, Available: [[http://www.rsa.org.nz/remem/ANZAC\\_2007.htm](http://www.rsa.org.nz/remem/ANZAC_2007.htm)] (accessed 12.10.2006)

- RSA c, Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association, 2006 Poppy Day/ANZAC Day Promotion,** Available:  
[<http://www.rsa.org.nz/involved/downloads.html>] (accessed 12.10.2006)
- STA Travel,** Available: [<http://www.statravel.co.nz/>], (accessed 13.01.2007)
- STA Travel, Define your own OE,** Available:  
[http://www.statravel.co.nz/cps/rde/xchg/nz\\_division\\_web\\_live/hs.xsl/big\\_oe.htm?WT.mc\\_id=onsite\\_flash\\_bigoe](http://www.statravel.co.nz/cps/rde/xchg/nz_division_web_live/hs.xsl/big_oe.htm?WT.mc_id=onsite_flash_bigoe)] (accessed 13.01.2007)
- Statistics New Zealand, Tourism and Migration 2005,** Available:  
[<http://www.stats.govt.nz/tables/tourism-migration-2005.htm>] (accessed 20.11.2006)
- UK Home Office, Immigration and Nationality Directorate,** Available:  
[<http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/applying/rightofabode>] (accessed 06.06.2006)
- University of Auckland, Auckland International,** Available:  
[<http://www.auckland.ac.nz/international/>] (accessed 21.02.1007)
- University of Canterbury, International Students. Exchange Students. Information for Outgoing Exchange Students,** Available:  
[<http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/intstud/exchange/outgo.shtml>] (accessed 22.02.2007)
- University of Cincinnati, College of Law, International Student Exchange Program with the University of Cincinnati,** Available:  
[<http://www.law.uc.edu/academics/canterburynz.html>] (accessed 22.02.2007)

## Appendix A: Interview information sheet

---

**School of Sociology and Anthropology  
University of Canterbury  
PB 4800  
Christchurch**

### **INFORMATION SHEET**

You are invited to participate as a subject in the research project “Should I stay or should I go? – The pushes and the pulls around the Overseas Experience in New Zealand”.

I’m a M.A. student from Germany who is interested in finding out about why many young New Zealanders leave the country every year to go on their ‘OE’. Through talking to those who are planning their OE, I hope to get an insight into the reasons a significant proportion of young New Zealanders undertake this travel activity. I’m also interested in what makes it possible for New Zealanders to have an OE and what makes it difficult for some young New Zealanders to do this.

If you are planning an OE, I would like to talk to you for just over an hour about your OE plans and your ideas about what has to be part of a ‘good’ OE. You will have the right to withdraw from the project at any time, including the withdrawal of any information you have provided.

Findings for the interviews will be included in my M.A. thesis and possibly a journal article, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation: the identities of participants will not be made public. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, no names will be mentioned. The information collected will be accessed only by me and will be kept in a secure place.

The project is being carried out as a requirement for an M.A. thesis in Sociology by Anika Haverig, under the supervision of Rosemary Du Plessis, who can be contacted at (03) 3642878 ext. 6878, and Ruth McManus, who can be contacted at (03) 3642987 ext. 3046. They will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project.

This project has been reviewed *and approved* by the Human Ethics Committee of the School of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Canterbury.

Anika Haverig

e-mail: aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz  
Phone: 03 3793203



## Appendix B: Questionnaire information sheet

---

### Questionnaire

*Should I stay or should I go? – The pushes and the pulls around the “Overseas Experience” in New Zealand*

**Please read the following note before completing the questionnaire.**

You are invited to participate in the research project *“Should I stay or should I go? – The pushes and the pulls around the “Overseas Experience” in New Zealand”* by completing the following questionnaire. The aim of this project is to explore why some young adults from New Zealand go on extended working holidays to other countries and what contributes to this migration of people to other places. I’m also interested in things that stop some people from experiencing an ‘OE’.

The project is being carried out for a M.A. in Sociology by Anika Haverig, under the supervision of Rosemary Du Plessis, who can be contacted at (03) 3642878 ext. 6878, and Ruth McManus, who can be contacted at (03) 3642987 ext. 3046. They will be pleased to discuss any concerns you may have about participation in the project.

The questionnaire is anonymous, and you will not be identified as a participant in this study.

You may withdraw your participation, including withdrawal of any information you have provided, until your questionnaire has been added to the others collected. Because it is anonymous, it cannot be retrieved after that.

**By completing the questionnaire it will be understood that you have consented to participate in the project, and that you consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved.**

Thank you for your participation.

Anika Haverig

e-mail: [aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz)

phone: 03 3745007

School of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Canterbury, PB 4800, Christchurch

## Appendix C: Interview consent form

---

Anika Haverig  
School of Sociology and Anthropology  
University of Canterbury  
PB 4800  
Christchurch

e-mail: aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz  
phone: 03 3793203

06.06.2006

### Interview Consent Form

*Should I stay or should I go? – The pushes and the pulls around the ‘Overseas Experience’ in New Zealand*

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis, I agree to be interviewed for this project, and I consent to publication of the results with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved.

I understand also that I may at any time withdraw from the project, including the withdrawal of any information I have provided.

NAME (*please print*): \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

## Appendix D: Information provided on the blog

---



### About Me

**Name:**Anika

**Location:**Christchurch,  
Canterbury, New Zealand

I became interested in the OE after talking to young 'Kiwis' while studying in New Zealand on an overseas exchange programme through my University in Germany. After finishing my degree in Germany, I'm back in NZ as a postgrad student at the University of Canterbury, researching the 'Kiwi OE' for a Masters in Sociology.

## Appendix E: List of participants

Pseudonym	Age	Education/ Occupation
Kevin	19	Student at the University of Canterbury, business & commerce
Stephen	21	Student at the University of Canterbury, engineering
Mark	25	Student at the University of Canterbury, sociology
Ruby	19	Student at the University of Canterbury, law, sociology
Sina	22	Student at the University of Canterbury, commerce
Rebecca	19	Student at the University of Canterbury, religious studies, psychology
Susan	23	Student at the University of Canterbury, psychology
Victoria	18	Student at the New Zealand College of Early Childhood Education
Zoë	23	Student at Lincoln University, Environmental Management
Tom	22	Manager Position in hotel/ backpacker in Christchurch, Polytech degree in tourism
Oliver	24	Commercial property broker for an international company, Lincoln University graduate
Thomas	26	Employed as a scientist, Master of Mechanical Engineering, University of Canterbury
Chris	27	Contract work with DOC, Lincoln graduate, Bachelor in Parks & Recreation, Tourism Management
Andrew	23	Employed as a hairdresser in Christchurch, National Hairdressing Certificate from Avonmore Tertiary Institute
Fiona	23	Support worker, Bachelor in psychology and social work, University of Canterbury
Skye	22	Employed as a planner by a government organisation, Bachelor in environmental planning, Lincoln University
Anna	26	Employed position in an environmental organisation, Master of Science and Geography, Otago University
Emma	25	Employed by a TV station, Bachelor of Broadcasting Communication, New Zealand Broadcasting School, CPIT

## Appendix F: Advertisement for interview participants

# Thinking of doing an OE?

Aged between 18 and 30?

Interested in participating in a study about  
the **Kiwi OE**?

I'm researching the Kiwi Overseas Experience as part of my work for a Masters in Sociology at the University of Canterbury. The study aims at finding out more about the OE. I'm particularly interested in the plans young adults from New Zealand have for travel and work in other parts of the world.

**If you are interested in participating in an interview as part of this study, please let me know:**

Anika Haverig  
School of Sociology and Anthropology  
University of Canterbury, PB 4800, Christchurch  
e-mail: [aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz)  
phone: 021 062 0314

Anika Haverig  
[Aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:Aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz)  
021 062 0314

Anika Haverig  
[Aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:Aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz)  
021 062 0314

Anika Haverig  
[Aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:Aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz)  
021 062 0314

Anika Haverig  
[Aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:Aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz)  
021 062 0314

Anika Haverig  
[Aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:Aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz)  
021 062 0314

Anika Haverig  
[Aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:Aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz)  
021 062 0314

Anika Haverig  
[Aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:Aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz)  
021 062 0314

Anika Haverig  
[Aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:Aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz)  
021 062 0314

## Appendix G: The pamphlet

---



Thinking of doing  
an OE?

Aged between 18 and 30?

Interested in a study about the  
Kiwi OE?



I'm researching the Kiwi OE as part of my work for a Masters in Sociology at the University of Canterbury. The study aims to find out more about the OE. I'm particularly interested in the plans young adults from New Zealand have for travel and work in other parts of the world.

If you are planning an OE, I would like to talk to you about your OE plans and your ideas about what has to be part of a 'good' OE.

If you are interested in participating in an interview, please let me know:

**Anika Haverig**

School of Sociology and Anthropology  
University of Canterbury  
PB 4800  
Christchurch

e-mail: [aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz](mailto:aha83@student.canterbury.ac.nz)  
phone: 03 3745007

If you are interested in the topic, you can also visit my OE forum on the net and leave your comments:

<http://the-big-oe.blogspot.com>

## Appendix H: Schedule of interview questions

---

### 1. Plans for an OE

Opening question: Can you tell me about your OE plans?

- When are you planning to go?
- Where do you want to go?
- Do you plan to go alone?
  - If not, who are you planning to go with?
- Are you preparing for your time away?
  - If so, what are you doing to prepare?
- How long are you intending to stay overseas?
- Have you been overseas before?
  - When? How long?
  - What did you do overseas?
  - Would you describe this as an OE?
- What sort of work are you planning to do overseas?
  - Is the work you are planning to do strongly/ directly related to your current course of study/ your formal qualification or NZ work experience?
  - If so, how?
- Has your plan to go overseas had an impact on your choice of tertiary education?
- Have you found out about Visa Agreements with other countries or opportunities for working holidays?
- Are you planning to go on the working holiday maker scheme?
  - If not, what other options do you intend to take so that you can work while away from NZ?
- Do you plan to organise your OE with an organisation like 1<sup>st</sup> contact/ STA or by yourself?
- Do you have any concerns about your OE?
  - If so, what are your concerns?

### 2. Reasons for going on an OE

- Why are you planning this OE?
  - What is most important to you about having this time away from New Zealand?

- Can you imagine anything at the moment that could stop you from going?

### **3. Expectations**

- What are the things you most want to gain from your OE?
- Please indicate 3 things that have to be part of your OE.
  - Why do you think they have to be part of this time away?
- What do you think will be the highlights of your trip away?
- What do you think will be negative things?

### **4. Return to New Zealand**

- Do you have any concerns about what it will be like when you return to NZ?
- What are these concerns?
- What do you think will be good things about coming back to New Zealand?
- What will be difficult things?

### **5. Learning about the OE**

- Do you remember when you first heard about doing an OE?
  - What did you find out? Where did you get this information?
- How have you heard about the OE since then?
  - Have other people talked to you about their OE experiences?
  - Have these conversations had an impact on your plans?
  - If yes, how?

### **6. The big OE**

- What do you think an OE typically involves? Is it just travelling to another country or more than that?
- Do you have any definite ideas about what is a 'good' OE? What are they?
- Can someone have a 'bad' OE? If yes, what constitutes a bad OE?
- What are the three most positive things about going on an OE?
- What are the three most negative things?
- Do you think the OE is important/ significant to New Zealanders? If so, why?
- What sorts of people go on an OE?
- Is it possible to have more than one OE? Can you do it more than once?



## **7. Social context/ environment**

- Whose opinion on your OE plan do you value?
  - What do these people think of your plans?
- Do you think others expect you to go on an OE?
  - If yes, who has these expectations?
  - What is your response to them?
- Do you think the OE has stopped to be a free choice and become a “thing to do” in New Zealand?
- Do you know other people who also want to go on an OE?
- Do you know people who don’t want to go?
  - Can you imagine what stops them from going?
  - What do you think about people who are not interested in going off for an OE?
- Do you think it is easier for some people to do an OE than for others?
  - Who finds it difficult to get away? Why?

## **8. Media presentation**

- Have you seen any brochures or advertisements relating to the OE?
  - If so, what do you think of them?
  - How was the OE presented?
  - Do you think these advertisements are realistic?
- Does the media presentation fit with what you expect from your own OE? Why/ Why not?
- What do you think are the characteristics of people portrayed in the OE travel brochures?

## Demographics/ Personal Details

**Gender** ☐ female ☐ male

**Age** \_\_\_\_\_ years

**Ethnicity** ☐ Maori ☐ Pakeha

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you qualify for an overseas passport or visa through your family?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, where?

Current occupation: ☐ employed ☐ studying ☐ not employed

What is your highest level of educational achievement?

Have you travelled overseas? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what was the longest period of time that you spent overseas?

What did you do overseas? ☐ Travel ☐ Work

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have family overseas? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, how are they related to you and where are they?

## Appendix I: The questionnaire

### Questionnaire

- ☐ I have read and understood the information about the project provided with this questionnaire.  
I know that the information given will be used for research purposes and I consent to publication of the results with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved.

1 Have you heard of the term "OE"? ☐ yes ☐ no

2 How have you heard about going on an OE? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3 Please indicate three things that you think an OE typically involves:

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
2 \_\_\_\_\_  
3 \_\_\_\_\_

4 How did you get your ideas about the OE?

(Please tick more than one box if they are sources of information about the OE for you.)

- ☐ stories from family/ friends  
☐ books/ articles  
☐ travel agencies  
☐ travel help companies  
☐ advertisements/ brochures; please indicate: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Internet; please indicate webpage if possible: \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ careers advisory at school/ University  
☐ other; please specify: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5 Do you know about New Zealand's working holiday agreements with other countries?

☐ yes ☐ no

6 Are you planning to go away for an OE, to live and work abroad?

☐ yes ☐ no (please go to question 13)

7 If yes, where do you want to live and work? \_\_\_\_\_

8 What options do you intend to take so that you can work while away from NZ?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9 Did your plan to go overseas have an impact on your choice of tertiary education?

☐ yes ☐ no

**10 What is your main motivation to go overseas?**

(Number the following boxes starting from 1 (main motivation) to reflect your main reasons for going on an OE. You do not have to rank all these factors.)

- ☐ exploring other parts of the world
- ☐ Adventure
- ☐ experience different cultures
- ☐ broaden my perspective on the world
- ☐ get to know more vibrant places
- ☐ have a good time/ fun
- ☐ 'escape' from home/ from unfavourable circumstances
- ☐ visit family
- ☐ get to know the 'home' of my ancestors
- ☐ learn new skills
- ☐ further my career
- ☐ enhance my chances on the labour market
- ☐ "make money"
- ☐ other; please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**11 What could stop you from going?** (Please tick all relevant boxes.)

- ☐ nothing \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ good job offer on New Zealand
- ☐ Incident within the family
- ☐ money
- ☐ partner
- ☐ world politics
- ☐ other; please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**12 Please circle the appropriate number, which best describes your response to the following statement:**

**In general, people I talk to about my OE plans are encouraging and supportive.**

strongly agree

strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

**13 Why does going away for an OE not appeal to you?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

14 What are the three most positive things about going on an OE?

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
2 \_\_\_\_\_  
3 \_\_\_\_\_

15 What are the three most negative things about going on an OE?

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
2 \_\_\_\_\_  
3 \_\_\_\_\_

16 Do you feel any expectation from others to go on an OE? ☐ yes ☐ no

17 Please circle the appropriate number, which best describes your response to the statement below:

The OE has become "a thing to do" in NZ.

strongly agree

strongly disagree

1

2

3

4

5

Comment:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

18 Have you seen any brochures and advertisements relating to the OE?

☐ yes ☐ no

19 If yes, who was advertising? \_\_\_\_\_

20 Does the media presentation of the OE fit with what you expect an OE to be like?

☐ yes ☐ no

21 Do you know about the new policy regarding interest write-offs on student loans?

☐ yes ☐ no

22 Is this interest write-off an incentive for you to cancel or postpone a trip overseas?

☐ cancel ☐ postpone ☐ no

23 If no, why not? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Demographics/ Personal Details

Gender ☐ female ☐ male

Age \_\_\_\_\_ years

Ethnicity ☐ Maori ☐ Pakeha; please specify descent \_\_\_\_\_

☐ other; please specify \_\_\_\_\_

Do you qualify for an overseas passport or visa through your ancestors?

☐ yes ☐ no

Current occupation ☐ working ☐ studying

What is your highest level of educational achievement?

☐ secondary ☐ tertiary; please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Have you travelled overseas? ☐ yes ☐ no

If you have time, you can write about things about the OE that you have not had a chance to write about in the questionnaire but that you think are relevant/ important.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Appendix J: OE information e-mailed to Lincoln students

---

### **THE BIG OE EVENINGS**

*Thinking of going on your 'Big OE'?*

*Then you need to come along to the 'BIG OE EVENINGS'.*

The **BIG OE** is a Kiwi term meaning your Big 'Overseas Experience' - traditionally to the UK. The British High Commission instigated these evenings several years ago to assist the young Overseas Holidaymaker in planning their trip to the UK. They have become extremely popular for exhibitors and consumers alike.

These popular evenings are being held in November in the three major cities – Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. Entry is free and anyone can come along and speak to exhibitors who have first hand experience of having 'been there, done that'. They know what you need to know before you go!

There are a range of Exhibitors at the evenings. They include tourist boards, travel agencies, coach tour companies and Rail operators. There are a range of recruitment companies for teachers, doctors, nurses, medical technicians, health professionals, lawyers, pub staff, nannies, financial workers, social workers, accountants, IT staff, construction workers, civil and structural engineers, architects, surveyors, town planners, and project managers. There are Foreign exchange agencies who can open UK Bank accounts, accommodation companies, airlines, insurance companies, clubs, visa companies, hostels and baggage shipment companies – in fact you will find almost all the information you need to live and work in the UK.

The evenings run from 4:30-pm until 7:00pm and it is a free format so that you can speak to whoever you like for as long as you like to ask all your questions. At each venue there will be a 'seminar' held by the British High Commission to address all the most commonly asked questions on obtaining visa's, passports and entry requirements. You can also speak one to one with the British High Commission's Visa staff.

There are prize draws, but of course the biggest draw is the amount of information available!

Dates of the evenings are:

#### **Christchurch**

21<sup>ST</sup> November, 4:30pm until 7:00pm. **Seminar – 5:45-6:15**

Christchurch Town Hall, Limes Room, Kilmore St, Christchurch

#### **Wellington**

22<sup>nd</sup> November, 4:30pm until 7:00pm. **Seminar – 5:45-6:15**

Westpac Stadium, Level 4, Function Centre Entrance. Wellington

#### **Auckland**

23<sup>rd</sup> November, 4:30pm until 7:00pm. **Seminar – 5:45-6:15**

Alexandra Park Raceway, Greenlane Road, Greenlane, Auckland

For further information, contact Maggie Hunt on [maggie.hunt@xtra.co.nz](mailto:maggie.hunt@xtra.co.nz) or Ph: (09) 524 9664.